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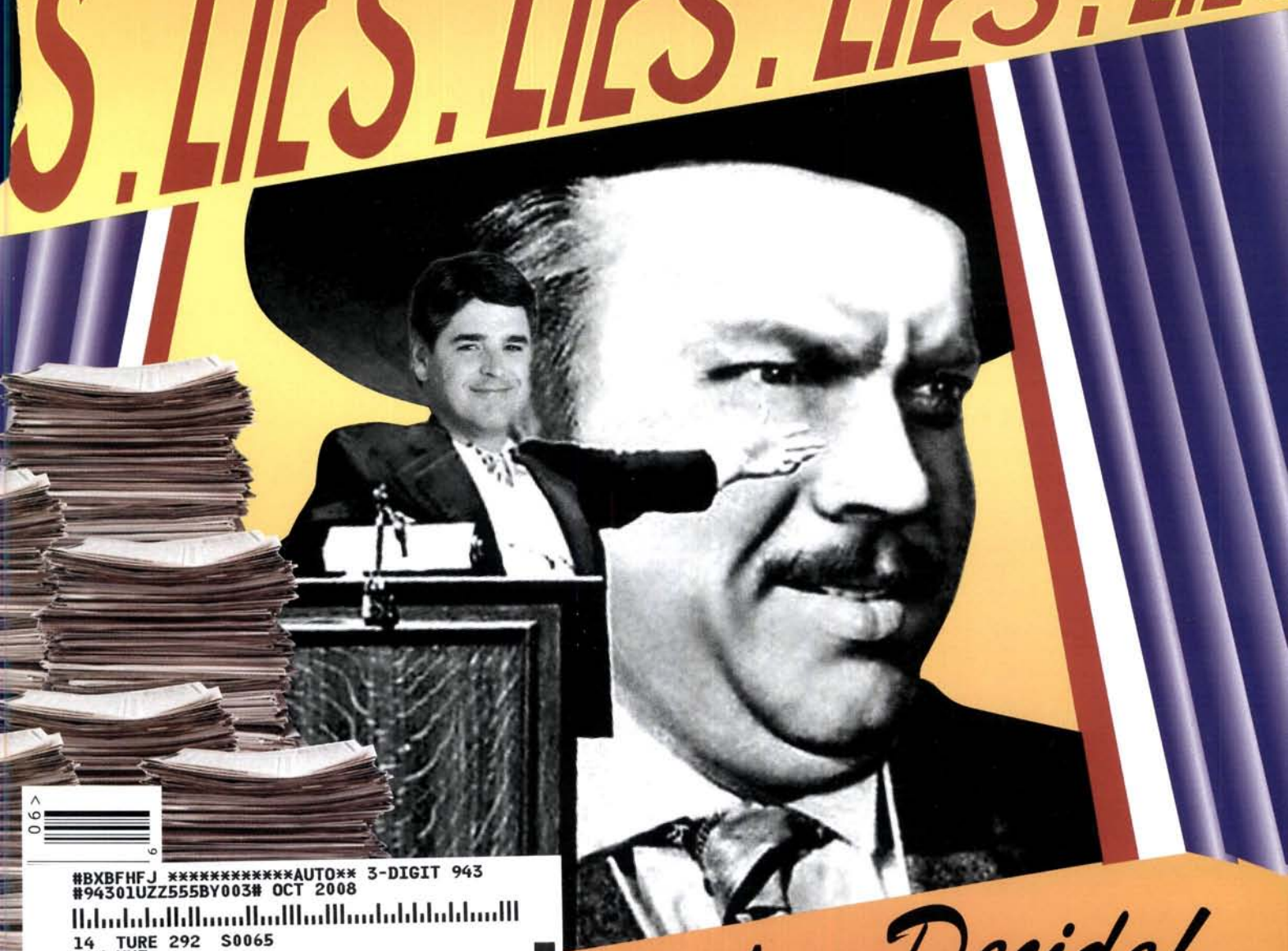

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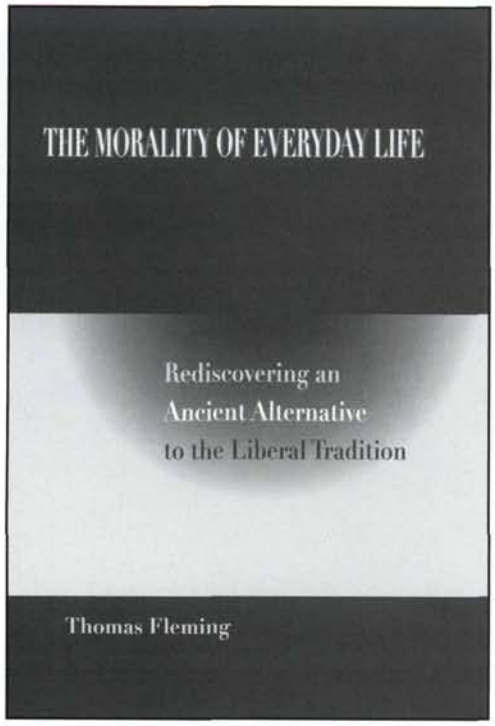

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by Thomas Fleming

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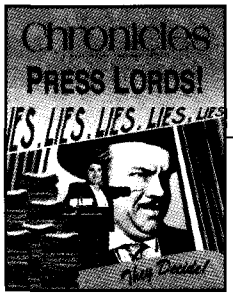

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On Romantic Fighting

I read Roger McGrath's engaging memoir, "Boys Will Be Boys" (*Views*, March), with real pleasure but found the skeptic in me thoroughly awakened afterward. McGrath offers a surprisingly romanticized vision of schoolboy fighting, which he regards as a healthy expression of boys' natural competitiveness and, indeed, as a key institution, a defining ritual in an older, tougher, more virtuous America. Fights, as McGrath remembers them, were "*affaires d'honneur*," pitting equal against equal, necessary exercises that tested what a fellow was made of. We need to get back to those good ol' days, "allowing boys to be boys—so that, one day, they can be men."

Like all gifted romancers, McGrath catches an important part of the truth but misses another. From my own years growing up in Albuquerque, New Mexico, I retain very different memories of what youthful fighting was all about. It was true that most teenage fighters aspired to a code of sorts—give fair warning, pick on people your own size, hit above the belt, and so on. But the code always seemed to break down in practice. The one-on-one protocol often flew out the window when friends saw friends getting hit or when an observer grew intolerably overstimulated, and, in my experience, numerically mismatched fights were at least as common as the other kind. The question of whether you would "jump" for a friend, in what circumstances, and against which opponents was matter for lengthy reflection and debate. One night, behind Frank's Drive-in, a favorite teen haunt, I was holding my own with a kid my size when I got jumped by a friend of his who was older, heavier, and meaner, a fairly well-known tough guy, who was soon dribbling and kicking me along the gutter like a soccer ball. So much for fairness.

Tactics, too, tended to fall well short of the ideal. Movies like to picture a showy, protracted exchange of tremendous punches, thrown with full arm movements. The truth is that the human face will absorb very little of that kind of punishment, and deeply sensible inborn reflexes arrange for it not to happen. Fighters would circle, circle, sometimes for ridiculously long periods, each just beyond the range of the other's artillery. The instant one threw, so did the other, and *bang!*—they would grapple and fall. On the ground, hostilities would continue in a less decorous but basically safer way, with both parties trying to punch and hold the other at the same time, gouging, twisting arms or fingers, sometimes biting. One high-school fighter was famous for having bitten off an ear in this phase.

Overall, kicking was nearly as common as punching. Kickfights, when they did not fizzle out, were rougher than fistfights, because, if one fighter knocked the other down, he could then kick him on the ground, and the worst injuries always happened that way. My good friend Stuart told the story of the fight he saw one day right after school, in which a kid was knocked down and then struggled to his feet, just in time to catch a kick that not only broke his nose but tore it half off his face.

I was spared the worst of Albuquerque's chronic youth violence by the good fortune of attending prep school, but many of my friends went to public school, and I got a good sense of the effects, all bad, of the chronic fighting there. In a word, fighting poisoned both the intellectual and the social atmosphere. When each day is menaced by the prospect of injury and humiliation, you cannot concentrate on your studies; all your energy goes to charting a course through the reef of your day. Within broad limits, the jocks, lords of creation, were entitled to do whatever they liked to everyone else, and the values of this aristocracy were, of course, widely adopted, which meant that athletics were hugely overvalued while other forms of achievement earned faint praise. McGrath sees fighting as playing a key role in turning boys into men; to me, it seems rather to have been a huge obstacle preventing schools from doing everything they were supposed to do.

Central to McGrath's vision of happy warriordom is his postulate of a male human nature that is inherently competitive and aggressive, exuberant, positively Nietzschean in its will to dominate, so that fighting is spontaneous and all but inevitable. I submit that this is pretty much the reverse of the truth. The thing that needs incitement and inculcation and constant reinforcement is the warrior ethic itself, not the natural sociability that

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equips boys and girls to get along, leading them to form groups and find their places and work out disagreements, though always with the odd blow here and there. Boys do not come naturally to the kind of fighting I saw and sometimes participated in (though always badly). Boys have to be badgered and pressured and shamed into fighting, harassed and tempted into it by the reigning social mythology. But the era when this was necessary seems long gone. Modern wars are not won by passionate daredevils but by soldiers trained in an ethic of sober professionalism that largely dispenses with John Wayne heroics. So much the better, say I, and we are well rid of an ideology that has always been at best a cruel accommodation to historical necessity, not something good or right in itself.

—John Kilgore
Charleston, IL

Dr. McGrath Replies:

Bejaysus! A Kilgore who does not fondly recall his days of fighting? What are they saying back in dear old Donegal?

As for the time Kilgore got double-teamed at Frank's Drive-in, I'm surprised that it did not evoke a general response from the guys. Such transgressions certainly happened in my times but were considered "really chicken sh-t," and there would have been a reckoning. I cannot argue with Kilgore's personal experiences or with his description of staged fights in movies—he's absolutely right about Hollywood—but, concerning "fighting poisoning both the intellectual and social atmosphere," I can only say that I went through high school unaware that there was such a thing as an intellectual atmosphere. I copied my homework from girls at nutrition and studied only enough to stay eligible. During the fall, my only concern was breaking away on a 42 trap in the game on Friday night. Come spring, I only worried that my hamstring might tighten during a 100-yard dash in the meet Friday afternoon.

I wouldn't characterize my descriptions of fighting as "happy" warriordom. Intense, vicious, raging, atavistic explosions is more like it. Happy had nothing to do with it. Kilgore also claims, "Boys have to be badgered and pressured and shamed into fighting, harassed and tempted into it by the reigning social mythology." Oh, hell, I don't even know what "reigning social mythology" is, but I do know that, when I was a teenager, if some guy looked at me the wrong way, I wanted to knock his teeth out. Admittedly, there were those who took slightly more provocation to stir the anger in their soul and some who had to be badgered and pressured and shamed, but, for the most part, socialization of boys meant getting them to suppress their natural urge to beat the tar out of the other guy.

I remember my first semester in college reading Freud in Psych 1A and thinking that this guy was the sickest, most twisted freak I'd ever come across. At the same time, there were those in the class who were having the "aha" experience, saying, "So this is why I . . . " Something in their life was explained to them. Freud explained nothing to me about my 17 years on the planet. Then, I came to descriptions of the Celts in Western Civ 1A. "The whole race," said Strabo, "is madly fond of war, high-spirited and quick to battle. . . . For at any time or place and on whatever pretext you stir them up, you will have them ready to face danger, even if they have nothing on their side but their own strength and courage." Diodorus Siculus noted, "When the armies are drawn up in battle array, they are wont to advance before the battleline and to challenge the bravest of their opponents to single combat." Aristotle, Arrian, Posidonius, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Dio Cassius had similar things to say.

If we were allowed to do what comes naturally, European peoples would not now be in the process of being displaced in France or Germany or England by Arabs or Indians or Nigerians or some such folks, nor would Californians be fleeing to Idaho in the face of an invasion from south of the border.

Since I suspect that Kilgore and I have not resolved all our differences in this civil discourse, there remains only one avenue for satisfaction: Saturday night at Frank's Drive-in, John. No weapons. You bring your seconds. I'll bring mine.

On Free Thought

Thanks for Stephen B. Presser's "The Unbearable Illegitimacy of American Law" (*Reviews*, March), an incisive analysis of America's legal amnesia.

Judge Posner's assessment that pragmatic "commercial values" have discouraged "reflection and abstract thought" invites a more radical probe. The thought required for wise, long-term administration of ordered freedoms (achieved by the Founding Fathers, who were, according to Forrest McDonald, the best educated for their task of any legislators before or since) has long since abated in America. However, as Edmund Burke saw, "to form a *free government*—that is, to temper together these opposite elements of liberty and restraint in one consistent work—requires much thought, deep reflection, a sagacious, powerful, and combining mind" (as taught so well by Irving Babbitt).

While John Stuart Mill's liberalism (along with clever Mr. Dooleys') sped the decline, we cannot for long ignore the impact of the suffragettes and the 19th Amendment. Discounting weak males and other liberal lapses, men are more cut out for "deep reflection and abstract thought" than women are. To assume that Condi, Margaret, Hillary, Barbara, Elizabeth, and Liddy are contributing deep thought and sagacious and powerful minds to the republic is the illusion of the age. Their main urge is to show that women deserve more power, inevitably defeating their cause, since, try as they might, they will never be able to make women into men, or *vice versa*, and will only cause dystopia and weak men.

As shown by Professor Presser, Lawrence Friedman is unwittingly a prime example of our decline, unable to grasp the message of civilization and reveling in the postmodern claptrap of "plural equality." As Fr. Benedict Groeschel put it recently, the most intelligent people are capable of the grossest error, and law schools, for too many years, have been turning out gifted "technicians" and shrill-voiced Regans and Gonerils.

—W. Edward Chynoweth
Sanger, CA

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by Doug Bandow

Shirking Responsibility

The nasty fight between Richard Clarke and manifold Bush officials quickly took on a "he said/she said" quality as greater violence enveloped Iraq. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice gave a strong performance before the September 11 Commission, but the celebrated August 2001 briefing memo warning of an Al Qaeda attack weakened her case.

Neither side likely possesses a monopoly on the truth. Both seem to possess selective memories. The Bush administration, however, starts with a self-inflicted disadvantage, which even its supporters overlook at their peril: The President has routinely undercut his own credibility.

For instance, while Mr. Clarke was making his case before the September 11 Commission, Medicare's chief actuary, Richard Foster, was telling the House Ways and Means Committee that he shared estimates of the burgeoning cost of the proposed Medicare drug bill with administration officials last summer. Yet former Medicare administrator Thomas Scully threatened to fire Foster if the latter released the estimates to Congress. "We can't let that get out," Foster says Scully told him. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson has reluctantly ordered an investigation, but that is not nearly enough.

Scully has denied the charge, claiming that his threat to fire Foster was made in jest, but he does admit that he ordered Foster to stonewall Congress at one point because, Scully believed, Democrats would use the estimates to political advantage.

Foster warned that the legislation would cost an extra $100 billion to $200 billion over its first ten years, an increase of between 25 and 50 percent. Had Congress learned the truth, legislators would likely have killed the proposal, which passed by just five votes.

Indeed, conservative Republicans, many of whom voted in favor of the bill only under enormous pressure from the Bush administration, were particularly insistent on limiting costs. "I think a lot of people probably would have reconsidered because we said the $400 billion was our top of the line," explains Rep. Sue Myrick (R-NC).

Even so, only blatant intimidation allowed the GOP leadership to eke out a narrow victory. Then came the Bush administration's January admission, just weeks after the bill's passage, that the legislation would cost at least one-third more than expected—$534 billion instead of $395 billion.

Although the GOP Congress voted in 1997 to prevent the Clinton administration from hindering legislators' access to the Medicare actuary, Bush-administration officials disclaimed any responsibility for alerting Congress to changing cost figures. Last year, Scully said that the Medicare actuary worked for the executive branch and that he would release cost estimates "if I feel like it." He obviously did not.

Once the revised number emerged, Secretary Thompson said nothing: "I did not tell them because it was not my responsibility." Apparently, his only responsibility was winning votes by hoodwinking the people's elected representatives.

The undisputed facts are bad enough, but the apparent threat to fire a federal employee for telling the truth to Congress is outrageous. So far, however, President Bush has said nothing about the matter.

Equally serious is the WMD fiasco. The President, Vice President, secretary of state, and secretary of defense painted a veritable arsenal of horrors: nuclear-weapons programs, anthrax, biotoxins, chemical weapons, nerve agents, smallpox, biological-weapons trailers, unmanned aerial vehicles, long-range ballistic missiles, and more were being developed in Iraq for use against America.

Said President Bush: "Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised." And this threat was direct, imminent, significant, urgent, gathering, and mounting. Indeed, said Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, "No terrorist state poses a greater or more immediate threat to the security of our people and the stability of the world."

None of these claims were true. Moreover, administration officials had reason to know, or at least to suspect, that many of them were false. The CIA, Defense Intelligence Agency, Air Force, State Department's intelligence bureau, Department of Energy, and International Atomic Energy Agency all criticized various administration claims. The top-secret "National Intelligence Estimate" on Iraq included some 40 caveats that were left out of the public version. Moreover, the U.N. inspectors who were actively traversing Iraq found nothing.

The fact that the Bush administration and its supporters believe that other justifications for war were equally persuasive is irrelevant. The President sold the war based on Iraq's alleged possession of WMD's. As Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz has acknowledged, the administration was split on Iraq's connection to terrorism and believed humanitarianism did not warrant risking U.S. lives. Eliminating WMD's was the one cause in which they, and the American public, all believed.

Yet the President and his advisors have not accepted responsibility. Rather, they have attempted to avoid the issue or pointed to WMD "program-related activities" as the equivalent of the massive stockpiles sufficient to kill millions of people that the President warned of in his State of the Union Address last year. As a result, administration officials appear, at worst, to be conscious liars. At best, they seem deceitful and manipulative.

That does not mean that Richard Clarke is right and the Bush administration is wrong. It does mean, however, that many people are understandably suspicious of administration excuses.

Instead of attempting to trash Clarke's reputation, the President should rehabilitate his own. A verbal acknowledgement of responsibility for past misstatements would be nice. Firing someone would be even better. Coming up with a serious plan for disengagement from Iraq would be best.

Trust, once squandered, is hard to regain, which is why the President's reelection is at risk. Even if his supporters care about nothing other than winning in November, they should demand that administration officials begin accepting responsibility for their actions. ◁C

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JOHN KERRY may have blown it already. After an impressive come-from-behind nab of the Democratic nomination this winter, the Massachusetts senator seemed ready to offer a formidable threat to the bubblehead who currently takes up space in the White House. Faced with economic erosion, the loss of American jobs to outsourcing, the disenchantment of his conservative base over amnesty, homosexual "marriage," and budgetary deviations, and saddled with an increasingly bloody, costly, and unsuccessful war in Iraq as well as accusations of incompetence in anticipating the September 11 attacks, President Bush looked very much like a political sitting duck that would easily be knocked over by Mr. Kerry or any other presentable Democrat.

Yet, within a few weeks, Mr. Kerry was ceasing to look quite so presentable. First, there was his . . . well . . . "personality." Mr. Kerry's main achievement in the first few weeks after the end of the primaries was to establish that he had none. He succeeded in turning the phrase "empty suit" into a cliché and (always a bad sign for presidential contenders) providing fodder for Jay Leno's gagwriters.

Then there was the little matter of Mr. K's dubious past. The White House and its propagandists in the "conservative movement" brushed up on Mr. Kerry's vacuous (and then-fashionable) anti-American blatherings from the Vietnam era and trotted out every photograph they could scrape from crumbling newspapers of Mr. Kerry with Jane Fonda anywhere within the radius of a football field. All of that, of course, was fair game. Miss Fonda's own contribution to American history has been to make herself probably the most hated woman of the last century, and justifiably so. Proximity to her, ever or anywhere, is more than enough to wreck any political career outside Massachusetts or California.

The final blow to the Kerry crusade, however, may have been his penchant for confirming what Republican propaganda insinuated—that, for all his Yalie smooths and chestful of medals, he was, at root, as alien to the real America as his porcine and oafish mentor Ted Kennedy. Mr. Kerry's dumb remarks about "Pope Pius XXIII" and his claims that foreign leaders had secretly endorsed him tended to verify suspicions that the man is simply as clueless about his own country, its people, their beliefs and values, as Teddy and Jane are. The problem with the foreign-leaders claim is not that it was not true (it is almost certainly true that many foreign leaders would prefer someone other than Mr. Bush as president, but virtually none would be stupid enough to tell his chief political rival that) but that Mr. Kerry chose to say it at all.

Whatever Mr. Bush's blunders in foreign affairs—and he has probably committed more than any other president since Jimmy Carter—they are our blunders and matters that we as Americans should deal with. What "foreign leaders" think or say about them or U.S. foreign policy or the men who make it or possible alternatives to them has no more to do with which candidate Americans should vote for than does the color of the candidates' socks.

The real problem with Mr. Kerry's boast of foreign leaders' support is that the remark shows he does not understand that; of course, his critics mainly did not get it, either. The point was entirely missed during the ensuing controversy between Democrats and Republicans over whether the "foreign leaders" really said what Mr. Kerry claimed they said.

A John Kerry presidency is, to say the least, not an appetizing prospect and not one *Chronicles* or its readers or any other American should welcome, but the boondoggles of Bush II have been so serious that the election should have been Mr. Kerry's to lose, regardless of our preferences. The lackluster beginning of Mr. Kerry's run for the White House may or may not have destroyed his opportunity to kick Mr. Bush out of it, but it does little to convince Americans that their nation's political culture today is capable of offering up any decent, competent, and attractive alternative to the two characters aspiring to govern it.

—*Samuel Francis*

BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION (1954), the famous decision of the Warren Court which held that racial segregation in the state public schools violated the 14th Amendment's guarantee of the "equal protection" of the laws, turns 50 on May 17, 2004. The inevitable celebrations of the decision in the nation's law reviews and popular media will underscore its landmark character and will generally hail it as a triumph of enlightened constitutional jurisprudence. Insofar as *Brown* contributed to the emerging national goal in the 20th century of removing racial stigma and lead to a recognition that all ought to enjoy equality of opportunity—and, to an undeniable extent, it did—the decision deserves the praise that will be heaped upon it. *Brown* has its tragic side, however, and much of that is likely to be ignored in the expected paeans. To be fair, some articles have appeared in such august magazines as the *ABA Journal*, the profession's leading monthly, lamenting that *Brown* and its progeny could not assure racial integration in the nation's public schools and that, in our urban centers, at least, because of the white flight to the suburbs that *Brown* inadvertently encouraged, minorities still make up the majority in the public schools. *Brown* may have successfully led to a change in the culture, but, in the end, it did little to accomplish its assimilationist goal in many of the nation's schools.

The real, often overlooked, tragedy of *Brown*, though, is that it marked the beginning of the ascendancy of the jurisprudence of a "living Constitution," one that the federal courts would proceed to remake, the better to accord with judges' policy preferences. Two of Chief Justice Warren's orotund pronouncements foretold the tale.

"We cannot turn the clock back to 1868 when the [14th] Amendment was adopted," said the new Chief Justice, dismissing the previously dominant school that interpreted the Constitution according to the manner in which it was understood at the time it was framed. This was, at best, a noble lie, because objective scholarship has nicely demonstrated that, at the time of the 14th Amendment, the "equal protection" language invoked in *Brown* was understood only to guarantee that blacks and whites were to enjoy the same property and contract rights and that the amendment had nothing to do with public schools (there were few at the time) or with a host of other activities conducted at the state and local levels that the Constitution had always been understood to leave free from federal interference.

"To separate [black children] of simi-

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lar ages and qualifications solely because of their race," stated Warren, "generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone." To support this assertion, the Supreme Court cited not law but the debatable work of sociologists and social psychologists and, thus, created a precedent for future justices to rely on social science, or even allegedly enlightened opinion from other countries, to impose their favored public policies on the rest of us. The latest instances, of course, are *Lawrence and Garner* v. *Texas* (2003), in which Justice Anthony Kennedy determined that the 14th Amendment prohibits criminal punishment of consensual homosexual acts by referring not to the history of the amendment but to current practices in the European Community, and *Grutter* v. *Bollinger* (2003), in which Justice Sandra Day O'Connor declared that, for the next 25 years at least, state universities could continue to discriminate by race in the interest of gaining the alleged psychological benefits of "diversity."

Brown may have done some good, and the latest scholarship on the case suggests that it struck a blow in suggesting that this was a freer nation than our competitors in the Cold War of the 1950's and 60's. By permitting courts a freer hand in making law and by stifling the traditional discretion of the states and localities, however, *Brown* accelerated an erosion of democracy. "Government by Judiciary," as one critic of *Brown* called it, might occasionally have fought injustice but at the price, perhaps, of ending popular sovereignty, the actual goal of the Constitution.

—*Stephen B. Presser*

VIOLENCE IN IRAQ has, since the end of "major combat operations," been largely identified with the "Sunni Triangle" in the center of the country. The Shia—who make up almost two thirds of Iraq's 25 million people—were glad to see Saddam fall. They were prepared to accept the occupation and cooperate with the new authorities on the assumption that there would be an election, after which the United States would transfer power to the new representative government and leave. Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraq's leading Shia cleric, knew that his people would benefit more than any other group from the promise of democratic elections. His followers and allies accordingly accepted appointments to the Iraqi Governing Council.

Another Shiite cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr, disagreed with al-Sistani's approach. He suspected that the United States would never agree to leave Iraq in the hands of her Shia majority, especially if the leaders of that majority were identified with political Islam and potentially friendly to the theocrats in Teheran. Al-Sadr was far from enjoying the reputation and following of al-Sistani, but his anti-Western radicalism has attracted a hard core of several thousand mainly young and dirt-poor recruits for his militia, the "al-Mahdi Army." These "Sadriyyun" clashed with U.S. forces in late March when the authorities shut down al-Sadr's newspaper on the grounds that it was inciting violence. Within days, al-Sadr's men took over government buildings and fought coalition forces in Baghdad and predominantly Shia centers such as Kufa and Kut. Particularly significant was their control of the central shrine in the city of Najaf, the holiest site for all Shia Muslims.

The standoff at the "Shiite Vatican" in Najaf has played into the hands of the radicals. While reluctant to be seen as supportive of the younger firebrand who had even threatened him in the past, al-Sistani can no longer afford to support the Coalition and be accused of treason. Al-Sadr may have been the *enfant terrible* of the Shia establishment, but, if he and his men are attacked, they would soon become heroes or—worse still—martyrs to their coreligionists. The two Shia militias that have avoided clashes with the U.S. military thus far—the Dawa and the Badr Corps—would probably join the fray. The nightmare of "two fronts" would become reality.

The U.S. administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, made a serious mistake by trying to deal with al-Sadr by force. Encouraging the traditional Shia establishment to keep him under control would have been far less costly, politically and militarily. Shutting down his paper, arresting his aides, and laying siege to his offices gave al-Sadr prominence disproportionate to his influence and forced more moderate Shia leaders into expressing solidarity with him.

The situation is further complicated by the deeper political cause of the deteriorating Shia relationship with the Americans. Their leaders see the recently passed interim constitution as unfair, deliberately aimed at limiting their power as the majority. The Bush administration needs to address their concerns. It still has a narrow window of opportunity to restore order before a new interim Iraqi authority takes control on June 30.

If the Bush administration wants to regain the support of the mainstream Shia establishment, the price is clear: The administration must promise that elections for the constitutional assembly and the national government will be held next year, come what may, and will no longer be subject to delays and extensions. That government is likely to be Shia-dominated, Islamist in outlook, and friendly to Iran, all of which is disturbing but inevitable. There is no hope that a more secular, Western-friendly political force—a Baath with a human face—will emerge over the next few months. It is therefore preferable to cultivate the devil we know, such as al-Sistani, than to risk the rise of al-Sadr and his ilk.

The neoconservative cabal in Washington will try to prevent this outcome. Come January 2005, we will be told that it would be "premature," if not outright "irresponsible," to let the Iraqis decide what form of government they desire. This time, such voices must not be heeded. It is in the interest of the United States to hand over power in Iraq to a local government—or perhaps several governments, running the Kurdish north, Sunni center, and Shiite south, respectively—and to withdraw. The democratic credentials and ideology of those authorities taking over from the United States are immaterial. As we enter what promises to be a long, hot summer of Arab discontent, the mission in Iraq must not be subjected—yet again—to manipulative shenanigans by special-interest groups within and around the Bush administration.

—*Srdja Trifkovic*

WAL-MART founder Sam Walton used to claim that he would never build a store in a town that didn't want one. Whether true or not, it was at least the right thing to say. Since Walton's death in 1992, however, Wal-Mart has largely dropped the pretense, forcing its way into Vermont (the last state to succumb to the world's largest retailer) and building up an army of lawyers who convince zoning boards to grant waivers to allow 40-acre parking lots and threaten city councils that suspect that Wal-Mart's "Always Low Prices" might, in the end, mean fewer choices for consumers and fewer jobs for workers as local merchants are forced out of

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business.

Recently, however, facing stiffer opposition from local authorities, Wal-Mart has adopted a new strategy that seems more consistent with Sam Walton's claim and which—purely coincidentally, of course—might allow the chain to do an end run around local government: Take the issue directly to the people. The test case came in Inglewood, California, where Wal-Mart gathered 10,000 signatures to put a referendum on the ballot after the city council successfully held the Arkansas empire at bay last year. The company had the support of Inglewood's mayor, Roosevelt Doorn, who said that the five million dollars in new tax revenues that Wal-Mart's planned Supercenter would generate made the referendum a "no-brainer."

There was just one little problem: It turns out that the city council was faithfully representing the views of the citizens of Inglewood. On April 6, by a two-to-one vote, the mostly black and Hispanic population of this Los Angeles suburb told Wal-Mart to go back to Little Rock.

This was no minor defeat: The company spent more than one million dollars on advertising leading up to the vote—a drop in the bucket compared with Wal-Mart's $244.5 billion in sales last fiscal year, but many times the amount that opponents spent to defeat the referendum. And it bodes ill for the company's plans to capture 20 percent of California's food market by building 40 Supercenters in the state. Oakland and San Diego have already passed legislation that will make it hard, if not impossible, for Wal-Mart to locate in those cities.

In an interview with the *Christian Science Monitor*, Rachel Morris, an opponent of the referendum, portrayed the battle as one against the forces of centralization. "The last thing we wanted was for a corporation which is not a democracy to come in here and act like a sovereign nation. . . . They were trying to tell residents that Wal-Mart is so big that they don't have to follow state and local laws. That is a nightmare and we didn't buy it."

Supporters of Wal-Mart have downplayed the significance of the referendum, claiming that labor unions and liberal politicians, including Jesse Jackson, misled Inglewood's voters about the potential benefits of joining the Wal-Mart empire, and some libertarians even tried to claim that Inglewood is nothing more than a series of strip malls and national chain stores, so one more—even one the size of 17 football fields—wouldn't make much of a difference anyway.

All of that, however, begs the question: Who should determine the economic future of a city, its residents or the Little Rock mafia (as opponents refer to Wal-Mart's lawyers)? The people of Inglewood clearly do not want Wal-Mart's "help"—nor, apparently, do they need it. In 2003, the city received an Award of Merit from the California Downtown Association for its efforts in marketing its downtown and increasing retail traffic among local businesses. In one very successful program, local merchants offer discounts to people who live or work in Inglewood. Money spent at those merchants stays in the local economy, benefitting residents and merchants alike. Money spent at Wal-Mart pays slave-labor wages to Chinese workers and further enriches five of the eight wealthiest people in the United States.

Mayor Doorn was right: The referendum was a "no-brainer." Perhaps the people of Inglewood, who had the brains to see that, may find their next mayoral election to be a no-brainer as well.

—*Scott P. Richert*

OBITER DICTA: Our poet this month is **Peter Hunt**, a widely published essayist and critic who sits on the editorial board of the *Chesterton Review*. His poetry has appeared in various journals and magazines.

Our art is provided by our art director, **H. Ward Sterett** of Roscoe, Illinois. Mr. Sterett received his B.F.A. from the University of Colorado and his M.F.A. from Northern Illinois University, and he attended the L'Abri Fellowship, where he studied the effect of Christianity on art. He currently works as a sculptor, painter, and printmaker in Roscoe, of which he is village president.

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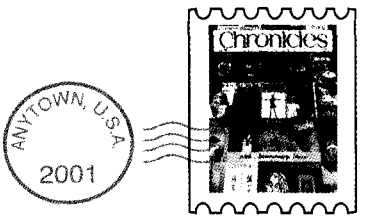

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by Thomas Fleming

Honest Journalist

Why are the phrases "honest journalist" and "free press" so often greeted with a snicker? Of course, everyone exempts his own columnist or talking head from the general condemnation, but most Americans also exempt their own congressman from the universal condemnation of Congress as a body made up of toadies and swindlers. To see the American press in action, simply tune in a program like *The Capital Gang*. Whatever the question that divides the group—the veracity and competence of Condoleezza Rice, the payments to Haliburton for supplying oil to Iraq, the voting record of John Kerry—the response almost always breaks down along party lines: Bob Novak, Sean Hannity, Tony Snow, Kate O'Beirne, shilling for the Republicans; Mark Shields, Al Hunt, Alan Colmes doing the same for the Democrats. Occasionally, a speaker wanders off the reservation, usually because he is loyal to another reservation like the conservative movement or Marxist ideology, but such exceptions are rare interruptions in the smooth flow of thoughtless chatter and fact-free propaganda.

I do not know why anyone bothers to watch the show—or, rather, I do know, but the knowledge is dispiriting. Party loyalists watch, talking over the enemy and applauding "our side." Listen to talk radio. Not all of the callers can be party activists, yet most of them have memorized their party's talking points and buzzwords. I used to do a fair amount of talk radio, but I find the experience increasingly depressing. When, in the Clinton years, I came on as a guest to criticize the insane and vicious foreign policy of Clinton and Albright, the Republicans could not praise me enough for my independent mind and well-researched positions. The war in Kosovo was a monstrosity, they said, and, as soon as George W. Bush is elected, he and his crack foreign-policy team will put an end to nation-building.

Once Bush was elected, however, he chose a foreign-policy team as stupid and vicious as Madeleine Albright and Richard Holbrooke, but, if I ventured to criticize Paul Wolfowitz or to defend the lone voice of sanity, Colin Powell, the same Republicans denounced me, and, when they saw how the arguments against Kosovo could be turned against Iraq, they either changed their minds about the Kosovo war or even, in many cases, denied they had ever opposed it.

Mankind does not need to be taught to lie—Adam told his first lie in the Garden—but it is disconcerting to realize that the talk-radio listeners, in modeling themselves on Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity, have learned to be as partisan and one-dimensional as their heroes. I suppose, in defense of the American people, we should concede that the best people do not listen to talk radio or read the newspapers. Proust suggests, somewhere in his unending novel, that we should reverse our reading habits and take a newsprint version of, say, Pascal to the breakfast table and, once a year, take down a leather-bound volume of society gossip. If, for "society gossip," we substitute "pop news"—the celebrity scandals, airline disasters, human-interest stories, and political propaganda that fill up the front pages of newspapers and the filler space between the advertisements on the evening news programs—we shall be well on the way to leading a fulfilling and honest life.

Was it ever any better? Different, yes; better, probably not. In the 1950's and 60's, the knee-jerk conservatives at *National Review* and the knee-jerk leftists at the *New Republic* routinely anathematized each other, while only rarely examining each other's facts or arguments. Now that conservatism *is* leftism, however, there is less to fight over. Republicans like to say that they have facts and arguments, while the Democratic left has only emotions. It is a pretty thought but not one that can survive an hour's exposure to Hannity or either of the Limbaughs.

There is nothing wrong with cheerleading or partisan pamphleteering. The press, to a large extent, owes its origins to the party pamphlets of the 17th and 18th centuries, and it is good to see that they are sticking to the traditions that made the term "honest journalist" a contradiction in terms. The only question is, "Who pays?" In the heroic days of journalism, dishonest editors like Bennet, Pulitzer, and Hearst paid their writers to go out and get stories that would sell papers, and the journalist guns they hired would have cheerfully sold out either employer or party in order to gain fame and fortune—though not in that order.

"Honest journalist" and "a free press" are not only contradictions in terms; they are mutually exclusive, because the nearest thing to an honest journalist is a man who will sell himself to the highest bidder. Once a man has made enough money—that is, supposing he is a man—he can devote himself to telling the lies he really believes in.

So the question is not, as our colleague Humpty Dumpty never ceases to remind us, whether one has the right to "make words mean so many different things"—that is, to mislead and deceive the public. "The question is which is to be master—that is all." In other words, since we must assume that journalists will twist and contort both fact and language in order to maintain the cause taken up by their master, the only question in American journalism worth debating (though even talking about the subject can sour the digestion of a philanthropic optimist) is who shall be the masters of the servile press—that is all.

The left generally answers, "the people," by which they mean the government, by which they mean themselves and their leftist colleagues who end up as the cultural commissars who run the NEA, the DOE, the NEH, and every other set of unpalatable acronyms that, when reassembled, spell out the ignorance and stupidity which are the fate of the American people. The so-called right (though there is not now and never has been a genuine American right that amounted to anything) answers, "the individual," by which they mean media corporations, by which they mean monopolies like Disney/ABC-Time Warner, by which they mean themselves and their friends who run the monopolies that spell the doom of the American mind and American freedom.

I say, a plague on both their houses. Television, movies, radio, books, magazines, and newspapers determine to a very large extent what sort of people we are living with. Imagine you could

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choose your next-door neighbor, and the choice were between Candidate A, who eats junk food, watches snuff films as he plays video poker, and reads the *New York Post*, *Hustler*, and the *Weekly Standard*, and Candidate B, who cooks at home, watches old Capra and Ford movies, and divides his reading between *Chronicles* and the English classics. If you are a neoconservative, you will choose A, but normal people will choose B. Why is it impossible to choose the cultural influences that will determine what sort of people most Americans are—other than the fact that public education is set up specifically to create A and eliminate B?

One quick answer, the answer we always receive, is that the nation is too diverse to impose a uniform culture. Then why, whenever it is a question of public money or monopoly money, are we imposing the uniform culture of Candidate A?

> See how the fates their gifts allot,
> For A is happy, B is not,
> But B is worthy, I dare say,
> Of more prosperity than A.

But let us accept the argument—and its consequences. The news and entertainment that would please Sean Scallon's readers in northwestern Wisconsin would leave Jim Tate's effete and affluent Long Islanders cold. Then why not entrust control over the news media—radio, television, and newspapers—neither to monopoly capital nor to monopoly government? Why not give these formative institutions to the small communities and cities that actually compose the mosaic of American life? Imagine a Corporation for Public Broadcasting set up as a federation of independent stations, none of them with power enough to cross the county line, the city limits, or (in some cases) the neighborhood boundary. (If we wanted competition, stations might be allowed to broadcast to two counties, so long as the other county had its own station.)

If competition is, as our classical liberal friends tell us, the prerequisite for excellence, then these thousands of independent community stations and community newspapers would be vastly more competitive than the handful of newspaper chains, major networks, and media conglomerates. Locally produced programs would draw on existing pools of talent and local interests, but they would also stimulate the local theater and music scene. Writers and performers would no longer have to dream of going to New York to "make it," especially since local shows could be sold to other stations, though a majority of the programming would have to be local.

In the "Golden Days of Radio," local stations had to be responsible for their own programming, and, although it was hardly a cultural renaissance comparable with the 14th century, it was nowhere near as bad as the entertainment programming today on cable television. Unless you have a package that includes Turner Classic Movies, your $45 per month buys nothing but the leering prevarications of Fox News and an endless series of sitcoms and drama shows as entertaining as a skin rash. I forgot: There is still *The Simpsons*, whose worst shows are better than the best episodes of other programs. (Yes, I have held my nose and watched just enough television to make such a statement.)

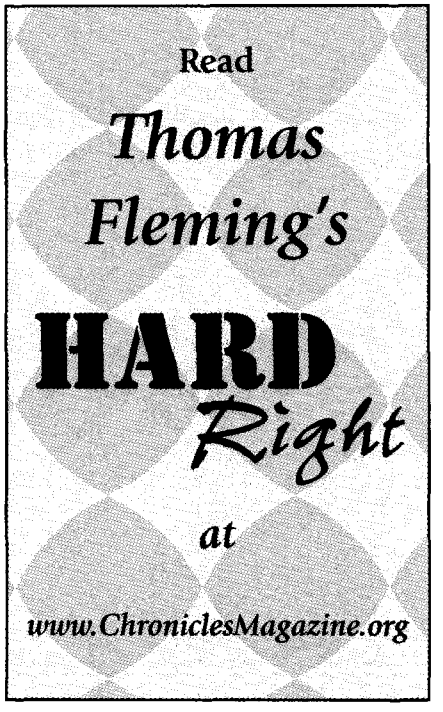
Local radio and television is fine, you will tell me, if it is only a question of putting Lonesome Rhodes and his guitar in front of a microphone. How could local stations cover international news? That is not a difficult question. After all, it would be better to know nothing than to know only what the networks and newspapers tell us—which is the case today. Complete ignorance is not the worst-case scenario. We have the worst-case scenario, and anything would be an improvement.

Under this utopian scheme, wire services could be allowed to operate, though (in my imaginary world) they would have to register a political affiliation and ideological orientation. "This in today from the Marxist-Feminist News Service . . ." or "According to a report in the *New York Zionist*, the Israeli Defense Force has killed a mad-dog terrorist."

The orientation and policies of a local station would be determined by a large media board elected by the neighborhoods. In larger cities, where there would be obvious conflicts, there might have to be several boards, each with its own stations and newspapers and each reflecting the ethnic, social, and religious views of its electoral community. Who would sit on such boards? The same opinionated, self-seeking slobs who sit on school boards today. The difference is that there would be no outside pressures and no state or federal money. And the voting districts would be so small that there would be no excuse for not knowing the candidates, who (like all political candidates in this imaginary democracy) would have to go door to door: No political commercials would be allowed in the media.

Imagine what would happen if Southern Baptists or black Muslims or Greens controlled even part of the media in their communities. There might be something like a genuine debate over principles. Americans might actually figure out what they really believed, as opposed to what they are told to believe. New parties might spring up, and the old ones might, for the first time in decades, stand for principles instead of representing the powerful special interests who pay for their campaigns.

If you like this proposal, do not write your congressman. My scheme has as much of a chance of being adopted in this America as the Constitution of 1787 and considerably less of a chance than John Lennon's "Imagine," which has become our ideological national anthem. Obviously, no decentralized system, either in education or in the media, will ever be created in the United States. It is useful, however, to think of how a truly American system might have been created, taking advantage of the only real American talent (now being lost): Our ability to mind our own business and take care of our own affairs within our own communities. The very fact that such a proposal seems so utopian tells us how far we have come from the real America and the impossibility of ever having a "free and honest" press. c



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A Flock of Sheep

by Peter Hunt

We're heading North through Scottish-Highland hills
Away from images of dark, Satanic mills
Which visionary Blake could not abide,
And gazing at the black-faced sheep beside
The flashing streams and grass among the rocks,
Remembering how shepherds watched their flocks
By night, or poor, enslaved St. Patrick slept
Under the stars, although his mother wept
In vain. He filled with prayer the silent dark
And felt an angel light the trembling spark
Of Faith that drove him through the years
To where his soul was captured by the tears
Of melancholy Irish folk whose dream
He heard them sing where frost and firelight gleam.
The images of sheep are manifold
From mindless mobs to priceless fleece of gold
Which Jason sought, and, crowding out the rest,
A notion often told in scornful jest
Of how the sheep is symbol of the fool
Who simply joins the herd and makes the rule
Of tyrants easier, and the slogan bleats
Like Orwell's sheep, and mindlessly repeats
The current message from the master's throne.
But seeing tiny flocks that dwell alone
In remote hills, enables us to see
Afresh the meaning of the mystery
Of love that counts each one as more than gold
And brings the wand'rer back into the fold
Where black wolf and fox cannot destroy
The Shepherd's leading home to lasting joy.

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by Roger D. McGrath

The Star Chamber

In 1975, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) launched a campaign for reparations for those Japanese who had been forced to evacuate the West Coast during World War II. A heavily financed lobbying effort came to fruition five years later when the House of Representatives passed a bill creating the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. The commission's primary mission was to review "the facts and circumstances surrounding Executive Order Numbered 9066, issued February 19, 1942, and the impact of such Executive Order on American citizens and permanent resident aliens." The commission was also directed to "recommend appropriate remedies."

That the commission was to recommend "remedies" indicates that government guilt had already been assumed: The commission needed only to gather evidence to support that conclusion and determine the nature of reparations. Nearly all nine commissioners—three appointed by President Carter and six by Congress—had long histories of leftist activism. Joan Z. Bernstein, who would chair the commission, had already declared the evacuation "a blot on the history of the U.S." Former Supreme Court justice and National Lawyers Guild member Arthur J. Goldberg had called it "a horrendous thing." Hugh B. Mitchell, a representative from Washington state, termed it "a great wrong." Former Massachusetts congressman Robert F. Drinan, S.J., had not only made similar pronouncements but had asked, referring to the evacuees, "How much are we going to give them?"

Also appointed were Arthur S. Flemming, a member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission until fired by President Reagan; former senator Edward W. Brooke of Massachusetts, the first of only two blacks to serve in the Senate since Reconstruction; William M. Marutani, a Nisei evacuee who was the JACL's legal counsel; Ishmael V. Gromoff, a Russian Orthodox priest evacuated from the Aleutian Islands when the Japanese invaded; and Daniel E. Lungren, a freshman representative who had conservative credentials but also a significant number of Japanese-Americans in his district.

The commission was given three-dozen staff members; more than a third were Japanese-Americans. Many of the others had been active in the campaign to secure reparations. The staff included no World War II military historians, intelligence officers, or government officials. Witnesses were not put under oath, and those opposed to reparations were interrupted or drowned out by jeering spectators.

John J. McCloy, the assistant secretary of war who monitored the evacuation and relocation in 1942, said that "it became clear from the outset of my testimony that the Commission was not at all disposed to conduct an objective investigation." The officer in charge of the evacuation, Karl R. Bendesten, simply stopped in the middle of his testimony, saying "I knew it would be fruitless. Every commissioner had made up his mind before he was appointed." Retired Brig. Gen. A.W. Beeman said, "I tried to give testimony before the Commission in Seattle. However, I was drummed out by a lecture on 'racism' delivered by Dr. Arthur S. Flemming."

Even more disturbing was the Orwellian omission of former senator S.I. Hayakawa's testimony from the commission's final report. Contending with boos and jeers, Hayakawa testified against reparations, strongly and eloquently, but none of it can be found in the final report, a 500-page polemic entitled *Personal Justice Denied*. The commission apparently was also ignorant of the most critical information concerning the decision to evacuate the Japanese: In the original edition of *Personal Justice Denied*, there is no mention of MAGIC, the decryptions of intercepted Japanese transmissions, which reveal widespread espionage by resident Japanese aliens and Japanese-Americans along the West Coast.

Soon after *Personal Justice Denied* was published, David D. Lowman, a career intelligence officer with the National Security Agency, wrote an article in the *New York Times* questioning the absence of MAGIC. When reporters asked Bernstein why MAGIC was ignored, she replied, evidently chagrined, that the commissioners had never heard of it. Attempting

to avoid further embarrassment, the commission quickly released, with no expert input, a five-page error-filled addendum claiming, incredibly, that a "review of the 'Magic' cables does not alter the Commission's position." Dan Lungren, a cautious conservative who had done little until this point to thwart the commission's agenda, added his own footnote:

> For us as a Commission to deny that the decoded Japanese cables compiled in the MAGIC volumes did not influence the decision made by America's leaders, tends to undercut the credibility of our historical pursuit.

David F. Trask, chief historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military History, said that the report was

> in the form of a legal brief rather than a history. . . . All is calculated to support the conclusion that the government denied personal justice to those interned during World War II. Facts and arguments that might tend to support a contrary conclusion are either excluded or rejected.

Nonetheless, Congress, not without dissent, accepted the conclusion of the commission—that EO 9066 was based not on military considerations but on "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership" and later passed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, giving each of those relocated or interned $20,000—totaling more than a billion dollars. Congress also allocated millions for teaching the history of the evacuation according to *Personal Justice Denied*. School textbooks now include excerpts from the report and omit any reference to MAGIC. c

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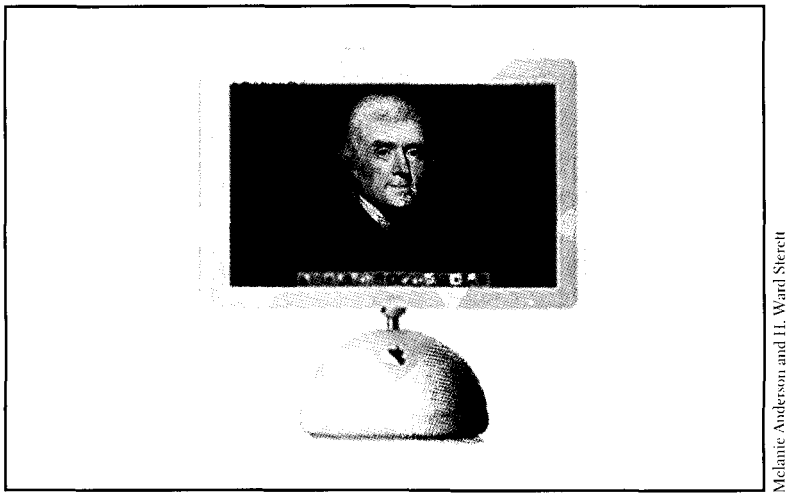
Independent Media Tribes

Bypassing the Old Gatekeepers

by Jesse Walker



Melanie Anderson and H. Ward Sterett

Last year, when the *Washington Post*'s Michael Kelly was killed in Iraq, an anonymous contributor to the leftist web network Indymedia announced the sad news with the tasteless headline "WP Nazi columnist bites the Iraqi dust." Word spread quickly, especially after Glenn Reynolds, the hawkish proprietor of the widely read *InstaPundit.com*, declared that "the Indymedia folks" were calling the late reporter a Nazi. Many angry comments soon appeared below the offending post, but Reynolds did not attribute them to "the Indymedia folks," despite the fact that they, too, were published on *Indymedia.com* and with just as much sanction from the site's keepers.

The Independent Media Center, as Indymedia is officially known, is one of the most successful publishing projects online, a sprawling network of radical amateur journalists that is open to virtually anyone with a keyboard. There are at least 135 local Independent Media Centers in over 40 countries; most are in the United States and Europe, but they have also appeared everywhere from Beirut to Bolivia, Nigeria to Jakarta, Chiapas to Thunder Bay. (As I write, the lead story on the IMC's main site announces that its African affiliates just met in Senegal.) Its admirers often ignore its faults, while its enemies love to tar the whole network with the most galling activities on its fringes; whether you are an admirer or an enemy usually depends on whether you share the network's leftist politics.

It is useful, however, to strip away the ideological baggage and set aside what you might think of the IMC's content. Indymedia offers a radically different model for producing and distributing journalism, with a very different hierarchy of standards from what you find at CBS or the *New York Times*. It has changed the face of the alternative press; and, just as important, it is rapidly being superseded by newer, more promising models. Its successes and failures should interest anyone who wants a more pluralistic media landscape.

It is widely believed that the IMC was formed just before the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle in 1999. In fact, its roots go back to 1996, when a contingent of Seattle's lefty journalists attended a San Francisco gathering called the Media and Democracy Conference. The delegation dubbed itself the Independent Media Coalition, giving the other attendees the impression that they were a bit more organized than they were, and they continued to hold meetings under the IMC moniker after they returned to the Puget Sound. Sometimes the *C* stood for *Coalition*; sometimes it stood for *Cabal*. By the time the WTO came to town, it stood for *Center*. Members of the older IMC had opened a storefront in downtown Seattle, and, from there, a core of activists covered the demonstrations from the inside, broadcasting audio, video, and written coverage of the melee over a website and a pirate radio station.

Already, the two most commendable aspects of Indymedia were in place. One is live, ground-level coverage of protests, giving the world a less mediated look at what is happening in the streets. (This is especially useful when the "protests" graduate to "upheaval" status, as in the rebellion last fall in Bolivia.) The other is a space where uncredentialed volunteers can make media of their own. In the wake of Seattle, new IMC's sprang up in other cities. The best of them were essentially journalism co-ops—places where people who could not afford a camcorder could share the group's equipment.

At first, those new IMC's offered another benefit. As a more or less open publisher, Indymedia generated a fair amount of trash (such as the declaration that Michael Kelly was a "Nazi").

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Each collective was autonomous, however, so each could choose what it wanted to repost from the other sites. This was something new, especially when sound files or visual footage was involved: Suddenly, radio and video had the flexibility of e-mail.

In theory, the good could have driven out the bad, as different IMC's selected the best material from around the globe and left the worst to rot. More often, the bad drove out the good. Indymedia was often among the first to report information that took much longer to reach the mainstream—or, in some cases, never reached it at all. It was also home to stories that simply were not true or were only half-true: dubious anecdotes of political repression that served mostly to make people think twice about believing the tales that *were* accurate. Video footage aside, Indymedia had a credibility problem. During the Washington demonstrations in 2000 against the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, Indymedia published hair-raising accounts of arrested protestors being abused in the city jails. Some of this was eventually corroborated; some of it was not. As long as a story had appeared only on the IMC, it was basically regarded as hearsay.

Meanwhile, the open newswire, where nearly anyone could say anything, became a magnet for unhinged posts. (At this moment, one of the top stories on the central site's open wire is a peculiar announcement that militia favorite Bo Gritz is starting a shortwave radio show. I say "peculiar," because the post is mostly devoted to speculations that "the TRAITOR Bo Gritz" is part of a government mind-control conspiracy.) Regular readers complained that they had to wade through bizarre allegations and bigoted rants before getting to the good stuff. Not that everyone agreed what *the good stuff* was: Whenever someone raised the idea of imposing more rigorous editorial standards, it became obvious that there were different opinions as to just which posts qualified as pollution.

For an illustration, turn to Chuck Munson's "The Sad Decline of Indymedia," an essay published on the anarchist website *Infoshop.org* in December 2002. More precisely, turn to the debate about the article that raged in the *Infoshop* comments section. The main Indymedia website had just moved the open newswire off the front page, thus segregating its edited and unedited faces. Munson endorsed the idea, arguing that the network had reached the point where "racist and anti-semitic views became *normalized* on Indymedia websites. Sure, newswire moderators would remove the occasional racist rant or picture, but lots of stuff was left online. This *normalization* of racist content showed the racists and right wingers that they could have their way with Indymedia."

Munson was not upset just with the racist material, or he would not have added "and right wingers." (One of his complaints, it turned out, was that people had reposted articles from *National Review*.) In the comments, one reader suggested that Marxist-Leninist posts should be restricted as well: If Indymedia plans to block the neo-Nazis, the argument went, it should not "want left-wing totalitarians cluttering up the newswire" either. Another reader had a different complaint: Indymedia had published articles by "pro-capitalist libertarians," some of whom—horrors!—had even joined local IMC's. A debate ensued over just what constituted antisemitism, with some posters worrying that a campaign against the obvious bilge (from an Indymedia site in New Zealand: "If you are Jewish can you tell us why it is OK for Dow to turn Jew Gas into weed killer here, for 50 years? I'll ask about the babies X 1300 in jars later") would evolve into restrictions on criticisms of Israel.

No one raised another issue: When you make a point of taking material down, you might give the impression that you find everything you are *not* taking down to be unobjectionable. If one antisemite is barred but another one slips through the cracks, what will readers conclude?

The great problem with the IMC is that it is trying to be two things at once: an open forum for do-it-yourself news and commentary (similar to, say, Usenet) and a network with a particular point of view (like, say, Fox News). It ends up being the worst of both worlds: Since it is as unedited as Usenet, the valuable stories and commentary hide among inaccurate reports and distasteful opinions; and those who do not share its leftist perspective simply write it off. There is no efficient sorting mechanism for distinguishing the credible from the crap, so you end up with some people dismissing solid stories because they have learned not to trust Indymedia, while other people swallow nonsense whole because they regard Indymedia as trustworthy.

Within the network, there is no shortage of proposals to create such a mechanism. Some involve a greater centralization of authority, usually by giving editors and moderators a stronger hand. Others would disperse authority still further, by adopting a rating system like those employed by *Slashdot* or *kuro5hin*. Many IMC's, for example, now ask readers to rate articles on a scale of -1 to 3; the results will not eliminate a piece entirely, but they will help determine where it appears on the page. While this is a step in the right direction, it leaves the central paradox unaddressed.

The same problem has not afflicted another genre of online self-publishing. Weblogs—regularly updated sites made up of diary-style entries and/or links to the rest of the web—existed long before Indymedia did, but they did not really explode until Pyra Labs made its Blogger software available for free. Between Blogger and LiveJournal, another popular free system, it was suddenly possible to maintain a website without any money and with practically no investment in computer know-how. Among the over four million blogs that have been launched (and often abandoned) since such services emerged are sites run by soldiers, housewives, children, and, in at least one case, a man who claimed to be homeless. Some bloggers are rising stars in the punditocracy, but the typical blog, to quote a study last year by the Perseus Development Corp., "is written by a teenage girl who uses it twice a month to update her friends and classmates on happenings in her life." All in all, publishing is not as exclusive a club as it used to be.

Most blogs are of interest to only a few dozen friends and a few thousand future historians, and even those sites that try to focus on matters of more general import typically have an audience in the hundreds, not millions. Blogistan includes outlets of many different ideologies and obsessions, the best of which offer fresh reporting as well as commentary and links; many are mobile "moblogs," whose proprietors use cameraphones and handheld computers to post writing, photos, and video footage directly from the field.

Like the IMC's, weblogs are tied together by a chain of links, each site constantly pointing readers to the others. An ordinary blog might plod along with 60 or 600 readers most days, then see its numbers spike when it publishes a post interesting enough to earn a citation on a more widely trafficked page. In essence, blogs have spontaneously joined themselves into a publishing model that is even more open than the Indymedia newswire, but with a much more effective sorting mechanism:

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Every blogger filters the rest of the online media, and readers can judge the trustworthiness of each filter rather than the trustworthiness of all blogdom. A stupid, inaccurate, or offensive Indymedia post reflects poorly on Indymedia as a whole; a stupid, inaccurate, or offensive blog post merely reflects poorly on that one blogger and on any other blogger who gives his comments an approving link. (That may be one reason why many who used to write for Indymedia have abandoned it to set up blogs.)

True, there are those who try to dismiss the entire blogosphere on the basis of its most feeble parts. Bill O'Reilly complained in a column last summer that internet writers "work for no one. They put stuff up with no restraints. This, of course, is dangerous, but it symbolizes what the Internet is becoming." In a subsequent episode of his television show, he whined that "the court system in this country does not protect anybody in the public arena. You—look, with the rise of the Internet—you see the vile stuff on the Internet? You could say anything you want about anybody."

This last comment was in reference to the reemergence of then-candidate Arnold Schwarzenegger's 1977 interview with *Oui*, in which he infamously described his drug use, his womanizing, and his fondness for the occasional orgy; the article had been dredged up and posted on *The Smoking Gun*, a site frequently cited in the blog world. As my colleague Matt Welch wrote at the time, the interview that earned O'Reilly's ire "*actually took place*, and was published in an *actual print magazine*." As such, it has a much greater claim to accuracy than a lot of what you might hear on *The O'Reilly Factor*.

I suspect that what really bothers people like O'Reilly is that the bloggers are treating them as equals rather than giving them the deference due to a member in good standing of the media guild. (This is all the more aggravating when you recall that O'Reilly does not exactly fit the classic ideal of the working journalist.) There is a saying you used to see on a lot of blogs, a cocky declaration that the old media feared the newcomers because "we can fact-check your ass." And indeed, a lot of the most fruitful blogging is spent exploding misinformation in the official press.

That line does not appear as much as it used to, perhaps because so many of the sites that trumpeted it have proved so prickly when fact-checked themselves. Dan Gillmor of the *San Jose Mercury News* has written that blogs "constantly challenge each other's facts and assumptions"; he failed to add that what can be challenged can also be reinforced. Tremendous tracts of blogdom consist of networks devoted to propping up worldviews. One group of readers can stick to such hawkish outlets as *InstaPundit* or *USS Clueless*; others can gravitate to such full-time Bush-haters as Atrios or Hesiod. Such sites will sort the data with varying levels of selection bias, repeating allegations that fit their outlook with different degrees of discernment and heaping abuse on other views with different degrees of honest engagement. At their worst, blogs become a device for taking in the latest information and massaging it to fit whatever you already believe.

It is no surprise that ideological tribes would spend their time confirming their own prejudices: That is what ideological tribes have always done. What is gratifying about the blog ecology is that it actually allows more stray signals to enter those groups' discussions than before. The groupthink is simply more obvious now, which makes it also more fragile.

Meanwhile, the mainstream media are reduced to yet another tribe with its own myths, mores, and sacred cows. This tribe does have the advantage of producing much more in the way of original reporting, and there is something to the criticism that many blogs consist of people who hate the *New York Times* but rely on the *Times* for all of their material. On the other hand, the mainstream itself is coming to depend on nonprofessional journalists for a large portion of *its* material. TV news frequently relies on amateur footage of accidents and other disasters, if only because a random tourist with a camera is much more likely to be taping when the unexpected occurs.

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Bloggers and their Indymedia kin are not necessarily better writers, reporters, or editors than those of the mainstream media. Just as they allow stray signals to cross into other ideological clans, however, they allow stray signals to enter the world of the old professional clan with its credentialist pretensions. As other forms of groupthink grow more obvious and more fragile, the same thing happens to the groupthink encouraged by the dominant media. The cartels grow less powerful; their ability to enforce a consensus shrinks.

That is why Indymedia should be of interest even to those who dislike everything the IMC stands for; that is why blogs should be of interest even to those who find the sites unreadable. Just by being there, they are undermining the power of the gatekeeping class—not by taking over the old gates or by eliminating gatekeepers entirely, but by giving us a new assortment of gates to choose from. You can view the world through the lens of *Infoshop* or *InstaPundit* or hundreds of other options, liberal or conservative or Trotskyist or libertarian or hawkish or dovish or apathetic; or you can combine a bunch of them to form your own media kaleidoscope. And no matter how hard you might try to stick to your favorite intellectual tribe, it is more difficult than ever to ignore the conversations going on within the tribe next door.

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Reality TV News

Scripted by the Bush Administration

by Justin Raimondo

From pro-war to antiwar, from uncritical acceptance of government pronouncements to principled skepticism, the American media's perspective on the war has veered drunkenly from one extreme to another. They not only trumpeted the lies put forth by the War Party but gave them credulous and even solemn attention, then turned on a dime and descried the deception—as if they had no responsibility in the matter.

They made our bed, however, and now we are all sleeping in it. As the *New York Times* editorializes against the neo-imperialist inanities that seduced us into war, they conveniently forget that their star reporter, Judith Miller, acted as a transmission belt for government lies. The *Times* consistently retailed the fables proffered by Iraqi exiles and presented the imaginative effusions of the Office of Special Plans—a Pentagon propaganda group described by Seymour Hersh as a "cabal"—as fact, while dissent on Iraq's WMD capacity was ignored or downplayed. The rest of the media followed suit. As administration officials raised the specter of a nuclear-armed Saddam—"We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud," Condoleezza Rice famously averred—the media, for the most part, reported all of this uncritically. In the meantime, however, there was a rebellion inside the intelligence community, with the career officers rising up against the political appointees—neocons with an agenda—who objected to the politicization of intelligence-gathering. As Michael Massing notes in the *New York Review of Books*:

> A survey of the coverage in November, December, and January [2002-03] reveals relatively few articles about the debate inside the intelligence community. Those articles that did run tended to appear on the inside pages. Most investigative energy was directed at stories that supported, rather than challenged, the administration's case.

In the fall of 2002, it was clear that the U.N. inspection teams had dismantled Iraq's embryonic nuclear program; the American public never learned this crucial fact, however. Instead, it was regularly treated to a series of fabrications thrown together by Pentagon propagandists and treated as unassailable fact by the major media. David Kay, who was making the rounds of the talk shows—and had yet to admit to the mendacity of the WMD myth—was faithfully echoing the administration's line and was rewarded with plenty of airtime. On the other hand, Scott Ritter, the former U.N. arms inspector, who was saying that Iraq had been effectively disarmed after Gulf War I—and, as it turned out, was completely and utterly correct—was relegated to "alternative" media and appearances at college campuses and before peace groups.

In the atmosphere of war hysteria generated by the Bush administration, the media was far more interested in the dubious fantasies promoted by Iraqi exile leader Ahmed Chalabi, a convicted embezzler, than in anything remotely resembling the truth. Now that we have marched into Iraq and uncovered exactly zero WMD's, the liar Chalabi revels in his capacity to fool those stupid Americans: "We are heroes in error," he told the London *Telegraph*. "As far as we're concerned we've been entirely successful. That tyrant Saddam is gone and the Americans are in Baghdad. What was said before is not important. The Bush administration is looking for a scapegoat. We're ready to fall on our swords if he wants."

On the subject of Saddam's alleged links to Al Qaeda and his purported assistance to the cabal that pulled off the September 11 terrorist attacks, the record is depressingly similar to the charade over WMD's. The Bush administration eagerly promoted the nutball theories of Laurie Mylroie—apparently a favorite of Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz—even after they had been thoroughly and repeatedly debunked. According to Mylroie—who is taken seriously enough to have been asked to testify before the September 11 Commission—Saddam not only pulled off September 11 but was responsible for the 1993 bombing at the World Trade Center *and* the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. If she suddenly announced that Iraq had caused the 1906 California earthquake, no one in her neoconservative fan club would even blink. Wolfowitz and war profiteer Richard Perle both blurbed her books, which were published and promoted by the American Enterprise Institute.

If the picture the administration was painting of Iraq as a terrorist nest was a little vague and short on details, none of this mattered to the major media, who simply reported it uncritically. From the neocon perspective, the dubious quality of the information received is proof of its veracity: "*Intelligence about terrorism is murky,*" said Paul Wolfowitz on Fox News. "I think the lesson of 9/11 is that, if you're not prepared to act on the basis of murky intelligence, then you're going to have to act after the fact. And after the fact now means after horrendous things have happened to this country." Translation: *So what if we're lying? If you don't believe us, you're taking a chance of being killed.*

Within hours of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the War Party had their lies cocked, locked, and ready to rock—at least according to former counterterrorism "czar" Richard Clarke and a report on CBS last fall. The neoconservatives came to Washington in the winter of 2001 with their agenda prepackaged and ready to be consumed: By the time the fall of that fateful year rolled around, the President of the United States was ready to swallow whatever they dished

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out.

And so was the "liberal" media. The smoke had hardly cleared from lower Manhattan when already 44 percent of the American people had been led to believe that Saddam was the principal culprit. Surely they did not jump to such an egregiously erroneous conclusion through a process of divination: The administration and its willing accomplices in the media did their level best to fix the Big Lie in the American consciousness.

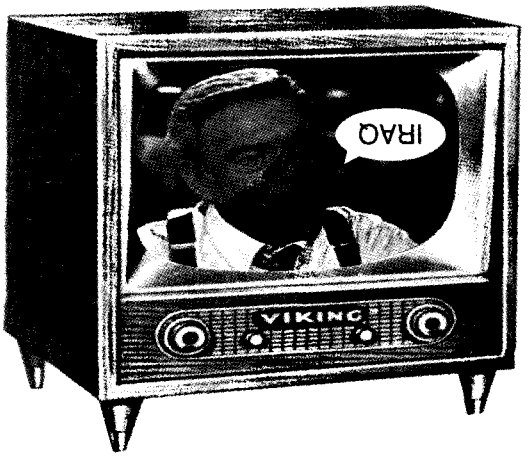
Perhaps the biggest lie of all was the smear campaign conducted by the War Party against anyone who questioned the wisdom of attacking and occupying Iraq. The most massive antiwar movement in world history was smeared as both an Islamic conspiracy and a communist front. Newscasters wore "patriotic" lapel pins as they broadcast news of American bombs raining down on newly "liberated" Iraqis. Reading government press releases practically verbatim to its fear-deadened and thoroughly manipulated audience, Fox News turned itself into the 21st-century equivalent of a Soviet-era state-run media outlet, the Pravda of the War Party, brazenly propagandistic to the point of self-parody.

In order to get even a semblance of what was—and is—going on in the Middle East, and what their own government was up to, Americans had to turn to the foreign media, but the distorting effects of war hysteria were all too apparent there as well—especially the penumbra of prevarication emanating from the Murdoch media empire and the domain of Lord Black. The London *Telegraph*, for example, was forever finding papers in the ruins of Baghdad—which they just happened to come across, you understand—that "proved" all sorts of untruths: for example, that George Galloway had received payments from the Iraqi government and that Muhammad Atta had met with an Iraqi agent at the Prague airport. Both documents proved to be forgeries: Michael Isikoff and Mark Hosenberg, writing in *Newsweek*, reported that the "evidence" of the Prague connection trumpeted by the *Telegraph* was "probably a fabrication." About the Galloway papers, there was no doubt at all: The smeared former British MP was awarded a substantial libel judgment, but the Labour Party, which had promptly expelled him the moment the charges were leveled, somehow did not feel obligated to restore his membership.

Forgery seems to be one of the War Party's favorite tactics, as George W. Bush discovered to his great chagrin when someone talked him into including the infamous 16 words in his State of the Union Address that alluded to Iraq's alleged efforts to procure uranium from "an African nation." That nation, it turned out, was Niger, and the President's certainty sprang from his belief that the CIA had the documents ostensibly proving that Saddam had made such an effort. These, too, turned out to be forgeries—and not very good ones, at that.

A grand jury empaneled in Washington, D.C., is currently looking into the Niger uranium forgeries, although we have heard next to nothing about it in the media, except for a few paragraphs buried near the end of stories about *l'affaire* Plame. The outing of a CIA agent by someone in or close to the White House is another story that the media is hardly making any effort to investigate. When former ambassador Joseph C. Wilson went public with the true story of Saddam's nonexistent Niger adventure—he had personally investigated the matter and reported back to the CIA that the charges were bogus—his wife, Valerie Plame, a CIA agent, was "outed" by vengeful neocons out to punish them both. A grand jury is investigating that, too—but we do not hear much about that, either.

We do not hear about a lot of things. For example, in the run-up to war, the antiwar movement was examined under a media microscope, and the old practice of red-baiting was suddenly in vogue. It was almost enough to make me feel young again. *L.A. Weekly*, *Salon*, and, of course, professional neocon character assassins such as David Horowitz and David Frum, went over the political résumés of the antiwar opposition with a fine-toothed comb. Somehow, the War Party escaped similar scrutiny.



H. Ward Sterett and Melanie Anderson

So, the media was servile, lazy, arrogant, and slavishly dependent on government handouts and sources in reporting the Iraq war: I'm shocked—*shocked*, I tell you! You mean there's gambling in this casino? Why should the media be any less decadent and indifferent to truth than their thoroughly degraded audience, whose inability to distinguish between reality and fantasy is exemplified by the success of the "reality show" genre, which first became popular—where else?—on Fox. c

On the Way to Inverness

by Peter Hunt

Small flocks of grazing black-faced sheep below
The ancient mountain-pass, blue haze of sky—
Row-boats rocking in their emerald castles
To the sad Highland song across the loch,
Silver flash of fish, sweet heather smell,
Lapping foam beyond the sea's fierce roar:
A haunted peace hard-won from bitter war.

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The Fall of Lord Blackadder and Lady Manolo (of Blahnik)

by Kevin Michael Grace

Mark Steyn once told me a revealing story about Conrad Black's "conservative" Canadian national newspaper, the *National Post*. It seems star columnist David Frum had ventured this evaluation: "The *Post* has a problem. It was started to save Canada, but Canada isn't worth saving."

Ah, the authentic voice of the Canadian neoconservative! Or, as English journalist Geoffrey Wheatcroft would say, the "self-hating Canadian." (Same thing, actually.) Steyn remains a Canadian citizen but persists in playing the "one-man global content provider." Frum, as we know, coined the infamous phrase "Axis of Evil" before finally taking American citizenship.

Conrad Black actually *renounced* his Canadian citizenship—and in a patently insulting manner. "For a wide range of reasons," he announced in 2001, "citizenship of Canada is not now for me competitive with that of the United Kingdom and the European Union." A year earlier, when he shocked Canada by selling his newspaper semi-monopoly (except for half of the *Post*, later sold for one dollar, and a few minor local papers) to Izzy Asper, stalwart defender of Black's nemesis, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, he explained: "The reputation of Canada is not particularly great amongst American investors, and the big presence we had there was not doing the valuation of our stock any good." So long, suckers.

As investors would later discover, however, most damaging to the valuation of Black's media company, Hollinger, was Black himself. And his "wide range of reasons" was rather narrow. Black was determined to enter Britain's House of Lords, and, in order to do so, he was required to quit Canada. The vicious Chrétien had blocked Black's ennoblement with reference to a fiendishly obscure Canadian parliamentary resolution. Chrétien insisted Canadian citizens could not accept British honors; laughable, but Tony Blair took fright. Black got his ermine robe in 2001, but if he had known in 1999 the disasters that would befall him—disgrace, divestment, threats of bankruptcy and imprisonment—he might have said, "Thanks, but no thanks."

He *might* have. You see, Conrad Black, like his hero Napoleon, is never happy (if that is the right word) unless at war on all fronts. Perhaps this has something to do with being Canadian. For so many Canadians, their birthright is as easily discarded as a tissue. Black carries his like a cross.

Or perhaps Black's wrath is congenital. His father, George Black, a brewery executive, retired from business (and largely from life) at 48. Soon after the death of his wife in 1976, after spending the evening with Conrad, he walked up his circular staircase and then crashed through the banister to the floor below. His son rushed him to hospital, where he died the next day. In 1982, Black told biographer Peter Newman that his father's last words to him that night had been: "Life is hell, most people are bastards, and everything is bullsh-t." (Black later denied this account to biographer Richard Siklos, author of the fine *Shades of Black*.)

Conrad Black was always singular. Born in 1944, he grew up in his own wing of the later death-haunted Toronto home. He was chauffeured to school at the elite Upper Canada College (UCC). An autodidact obsessed with military history and strategy, he bought his first stock at eight but was hardly a *laissez-faire* capitalist. He recounts in his autobiography, "One of the few substantive political differences I had had with my father was over his view that Franklin D. Roosevelt was a socialist, if not a communist. He has always been, next to Abraham Lincoln, the American leader I most admired."

Napoleon, FDR, and Lincoln: not the heroes of a conservative; rather, the heroes of a power worshiper. Black, however, is not a man who has ever had much use for authority, when not wielded by him. He compared UCC to a "concentration camp" and was expelled in 1959 after selling examination papers he and three others had stolen. According to his autobiography, he is "neither proud nor ashamed of what happened." Black's first felony was highly profitable ("a margin of 100 per cent, as I had no cost of sales"); he realized $1,400 (about $9,500 Canadian today).

Black entered poorly regarded Carleton University in Ottawa, where he remained a diffident student and enjoyed an old-fashioned, chaste bachelordom of cards, tobacco, and booze. After graduation, he enrolled in Toronto's prestigious Osgoode Hall Law School but left after a year.

It was only after Black moved to Quebec in 1966 that he began to make his fortune. Black was that rarest of Anglo-Canadians—a Francophile. He learned French (something few Anglos did or do), took a law degree at Laval in Quebec City and an M.A. in history from McGill in Montreal and began his laudatory biography of Maurice Duplessis, published in 1977. Duplessis, premier of Quebec from 1936 to 1939 and from 1944 until his death in 1959, was fiercely Catholic, conservative, and nationalist. His Quebec was hated by Pierre Trudeau and swept away by the Quiet Revolution.

It was in Quebec that Black got into journalism and met his lifelong partners, David Radler and Peter White. Radler became Black's chief operating officer and hatchet man; White has been a prime mover in Conservative politics for decades and was prime minister Brian Mulroney's principal secretary.

They began buying small Quebec (and later British Columbian) newspapers. Radler "phased-out" employees by

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the cartload and made the papers profitable. Black handled the editorial side and developed his prose style—orotund, sesquipedalian, bombastic—the worst of Winston Churchill and William F. Buckley, Jr.

In the 1970's, Black (with the initial help of his brother Monte) became Canada's most controversial businessman. He established the *modus operandi* that has served him well: holding companies controlling holding companies controlling holding companies, almost into infinity. It would take a monumental essay or a stupendous flow chart to establish what Black owns and whereby he owns it.

Black sweet-talked his way into control of Argus Corp and stripped its assets. He abandoned manufacturer Massey-Ferguson and sold Dominion Stores, after management had removed $62 million from its union pension fund (reduced to $30 million after court action) and after Black had accused the supermarket chain's employees of being thieves. He admitted it was "sad" that so many employees had lost their jobs but added, "It's sometimes difficult for me to work myself into an absolute lachrymose fit about a work force that steals on that scale."

An attempt to sweet-talk his way into control of Hanna Mining of Cleveland turned sour. Hanna filed a fraud and racketeering suit against Black, and he narrowly avoided being charged in 1982 with misrepresentation by the Securities and Exchange Commission. Black ultimately settled with Hanna and signed an SEC consent decree.

The Ontario Securities Commission recommended Black be charged, but he was not. Black was now established as Canada's unacceptable face of capitalism: if not a crook, then certainly sailing dangerously close to the wind. Black did not see it that way. He execrated his opponents as conspirators or "socialists" determined to hobble the successful.

After buying out Monte, Black turned his attention overseas. By 1985, the venerable *Telegraph* newspapers were moribund, despite being the best-selling British quality newspapers. Union insubordination was killing them, and the Berry family, which controlled them, desperately needed new investment. Black stepped in with ten million pounds. But dear old Lord Hartwell, chief of the Berry clan, had misapprehended the seriousness of the crisis. He was forced again to turn to Black, who offered another £20 million—in exchange for 50.1 percent of the company. Hartwell surrendered. One month later, Rupert Murdoch crushed the unions at Wapping. Black was now the owner of a gold mine, bought for a mere £30 million. The *Telegraph* newspapers are now valued at £700 million.

Conrad Black was now one of the most powerful men in Britain and determined to exercise his influence, not merely on his adopted country but on the entire "Anglosphere." A Hollinger advisory board was established. Among those who accepted $25,000 annually to attend one-day gabfests were Margaret Thatcher, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Richard Perle, George Will, and William F. Buckley, Jr.

Telegraph profits were used to buy the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *Jerusalem Post*, the London *Spectator*, and Australia's Fairfax newspapers. Fairfax was sold after Black alleged in his autobiography that Prime Minister Paul Keating had attempted to suborn him, precipitating a national scandal and a parliamentary investigation.

By 1995, only Gannett and Rupert Murdoch bested Black in worldwide circulation. Black had not forgotten Canada, however. He bought the Southam chain in 1996, which, added to the purchase of nearly every other significant independent paper in English Canada, made him truly Canada's newspaper lord. Liberal and liberal, Southam exemplified everything Black hated about Canada. Canadian journalists had always been wary of Black, mainly because of his habit of suing them. Now they were terrified.

(Full disclosure: I have had no dealings of any kind with Conrad Black, although David Radler once took a malign interest in me. I was promised—by its editor—the position of deputy editor of the *National Post*'s business section, but the man who blackballed me was neither Conrad Black nor David Radler.)

To his credit, Black greatly improved his Canadian newspapers, and the *Post* did valuable work exposing several of Chrétien's many scandals. To Black's discredit, he imposed on them a new orthodoxy as oppressive as the old had been. The old Southam was old liberal: antipatriotic, globalist, and reflexively antibusiness, anti-Israel, and anti-American. The new Southam was new liberal: antipatriotic, globalist, and reflexively pro-business, pro-Israel, and pro-American. Under Black, the *Post* was obsessed with Israel; reading it, you could not escape the feeling that Canada had somehow acquired an 11th province in the Middle East. (This became even worse under Izzy Asper.) Black's *Post* was infatuated with celebrity and sexual deviance and dismissive of culture. Black refused, pointedly, to fight the suppression of press freedom in Canada and suffered two of his papers to grovel before human-rights commissions—a far cry from the *Telegraph*.

It is also to Black's credit that he did not wreck the *Telegraph*, although it became duller and ever more neoconservative (as did the *Spectator*) and headed downmarket relentlessly after a cover-price war with Murdoch's *Times*. In England, at least, Black was something of a model proprietor, refusing to fire A.N. Wilson or Taki even after ugly public quarrels over Israel, preferring, instead, to inveigh against them and his myriad other enemies in the pages of his publications.

Black inherited many enemies with his second marriage. His first wife, Shirley, was an already-married company secretary when Black impregnated her. (She later changed her name to Joanna, after *faux*-sophisticate Black rejected Catherine as "too common.")

Black converted to Catholicism in 1986. According to Richard Siklos, he

> described the occasion to . . . author Ron Graham. It took place in [Archbishop of Toronto] Cardinal Carter's private chapel. Apparently Black told the Cardinal he was ready to join, and Carter said he would be welcome. . . . A debate ensued over The Truth. Eventually, an agreement was struck. "Then Emmett called for champagne, to celebrate," Black recalled. "So I didn't exactly go to them on my knees."

Indeed. In 2000, during a strike at the Black-owned *Calgary Herald*, Black excoriated strike supporter Bishop Fred Henry as a "jumped-up little twerp" and a "prime candidate for an exorcism." Ironically, perhaps, Henry is the only Canadian bishop faithful enough to the magisterium to have threatened a pro-abortion Catholic politician (Joe Clark) with sanctions.

Shirley/Joanna divorced Black and married a defrocked priest. Conrad wed the thrice-divorced Jewish atheist Barbara Amiel

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at the Chelsea Registry Office in 1992. Yet Black is consistently described as Canada's leading Catholic layman. British-born, childless (Black has three), and four years older than her husband, the pneumatic Amiel is a once-talented journalist who edited the *Toronto Sun*, a fiercely anti-Trudeau tabloid, in the 1980's. She is also, reputedly, the model for the villainess in Margaret Atwood's *The Robber Bride*. When Black met her, she wrote a column for the *Times* (since translated to the *Telegraph*, where it remains).

Black was dubbed Blackadder (after the Rowan Atkinson character) by the Canadian scandal sheet *Frank*. Amiel has proved to be his Lady Macbeth—or, more to the point, his Lady Manolo (of Blahnik). An *Observer* profile commented that, "To understand Barbara, you must first understand that she has been very keen to be very rich for a very long time." Amiel herself told *Vogue*, "I have an extravagance that knows no bounds" and posed for pictures that proved it.

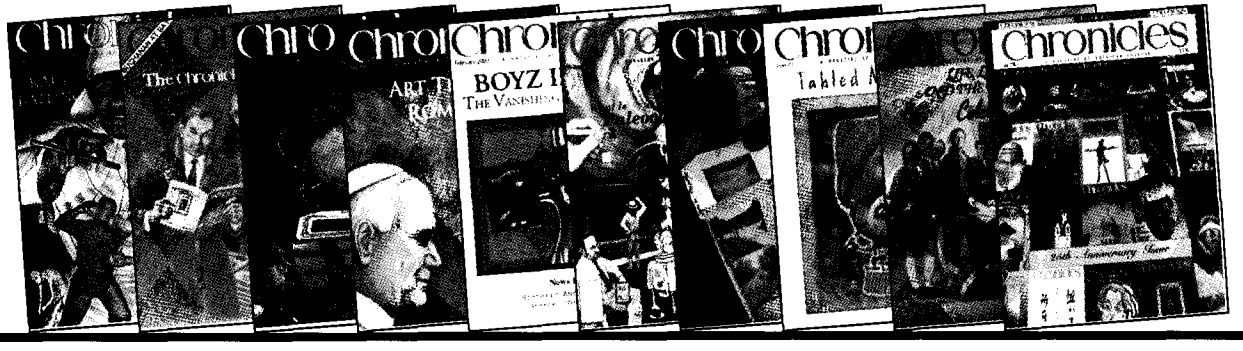
Under Amiel's tutelage, the bumptious Black became a lord and then a social lion. Questions, however, began to be asked (particularly by institutional investors Tweedy Browne): Who was paying for the private jets; the maintenance of the mansions in Toronto, Palm Beach, and London; the apartment in New York and the tab at Le Cirque 2000; the eight million dollars for FDR's papers for Black's door-stopping biography? Why were the *Telegraphs* forced to shed staff and resources even as they continued to turn a handsome profit?

As late as 2003, Black fired back in characteristic fashion: Tweedy Browne were "corporate governance terrorists." Black, champion of Napoleon, now appealed to the *ancien régime*: "I'm not prepared to re-enact the French Revolutionary renunciation of the rights of nobility." In November, Lord Black's Bastille was stormed. The Hollinger board announced it had discovered $32 million in secret and unauthorized payments, $7 million each to Black and Radler, which they agreed to pay back. (Black reneged.) Black, Radler, and their minions were fired, and Black's assets were put up for sale.

Lawsuits against Black, for $200 million (and counting), were filed. His fortune, whatever it was, is beyond his grasp. Black had seemingly forgotten, or more likely arrogantly ignored, that Hollinger was a public company of which he was a minority shareholder. When he and Radler sold properties such as Southam, they demanded millions in personal "non-compete" payments, even though they were in no condition to compete. They did so even when they sold properties to themselves. It is impossible to regard these payments as anything other than kickbacks (in the first instance) and outright theft (in the second).

In January, Black attempted to escape from his Elba. He sold the controlling stake in Hollinger to the Barclay Brothers, owners of Edinburgh's *Scotsman* newspapers. He met his Waterloo, however, the next month, when a Delaware judge quashed the sale and called him a liar.

No one is terrified of Conrad Black anymore. He and Lady Black are laughingstocks in Canada, America, and Britain—although Taki still has kind words for them. Oh, and remember that SEC consent decree? Having filed a false report to the SEC regarding his illicit compensation, Black now is at risk of criminal charges. Rumor has it he will flee to Canada, which, for all its sins, has an agreeably lax securities regime. For such a self-hating Canadian, this would surely be worse than St. Helena. c



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The Fourth Choice

Ending the Reign of Activist Judges

by William J. Quirk

If you are looking for a reason to vote for Ralph Nader, the way both parties are handling the "gay marriage" issue should give you lots of data. John Kerry, when asked his opinion of "gay marriage," looks like a dog getting a bath, as Chris Hitchens puts it. Kerry says he personally opposes "gay marriage"—but he favors civil unions, which are exactly the same thing. The states, he says, should decide the issue, but he voted against the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996, which was specifically designed to allow each state to reject marriage licenses issued in other states. Even President Bush, who seems to have the advantage on the issue, is ill at ease. He vacillated for months and then proposed a constitutional amendment banning "gay marriage" but condoning civil unions: "The amendment," he said, "should fully protect marriage while leaving the state legislatures free to make their own choices in defining legal arrangements other than marriage." The status in other states of a New Hampshire civil union is left to the courts—the same "activist courts" who, the President said, were so irresponsible that they made the amendment necessary in the first place. Neither Kerry nor Bush has a coherent position.

How did the issue of "gay marriage" come to the fore of social and political debate? It is the last thing Americans want to think about, but the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled in November (*Goodrich* v. *Department of Public Health*) that homosexuals have the right, under the state constitution, to marry and directed the legislature to pass laws within 180 days to accomplish that. The Massachusetts Senate asked the court if a bill giving same-sex couples the rights and benefits of "marriage" but calling their relationships "civil unions" would be good enough. The court, in February, ruled it would not: It is a "considered choice of language that reflects a demonstrable assigning of same sex, largely homosexual, couples to second-class status." President Bush called the court's February ruling "deeply troubling."

In late February, the President announced he would support a federal constitutional amendment banning "gay marriage" because "activist courts have left the people with one recourse." There is no assurance, the President added, that the "Defense of Marriage Act will not itself be struck down by activist courts." John Kerry said of the President: "He's trying to divide America . . . [he] always tries to create a cultural war." The *New York Times* editorialized that the President was putting "bias in the constitution." He was injecting "meanspiritedness and exclusion into the document embodying our highest principles and aspirations." All sides seems happily headed for another nasty, divisive culture-war battle.

Is such a battle necessary? Some on each side desire a national uniform rule either permitting or prohibiting "gay marriage." The majority of Americans (58 percent), however, believe the issue should be decided by the states. Both John Kerry and President Bush have, at times, said that it is appropriate that the states decide. What if it were possible, by a simple statute, passed by a simple majority in Congress, to assure that each state could choose for itself without fear of being overridden by a judicially imposed uniform national rule—and that no state could decide for any other? Could we just pass the statute and forget the issue (polling data show most Americans wish they had never heard of it) and move on to something else?

The answer is *Yes*, but it takes a little explaining. Last summer, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down Texas' antisodomy law, ruling that it violated personal liberty "in its spatial and more transcendent dimensions" (*Lawrence and Garner* v. *Texas*). The majority opined that homosexuals are "free as adults to engage in the private conduct in the exercise of their liberty under the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment," citing the European Court of Human Rights. Since, as the Court conceded, antisodomy laws "do not seem to have been enforced against consenting adults acting in private," it is unclear why the Court had decided to reach out and issue a ruling that was offensive to the majority of Americans. Justice Antonin Scalia, in a bitter dissent, wrote that the Court was taking "sides in the culture wars." Apparently, the Court wanted to educate and improve the country morally—to make the public aware that homosexuals are entitled to freedom, dignity, and "respect for their private lives." The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court took the lesson to heart in its November and February rulings.

The Supreme Court's effort to educate has been a total failure. Indeed, the more Americans have been forced to think about "gay rights," the less they have liked them. A *New York Times*/CBS News poll taken in July 2003 reported that 54 percent of Americans believe that homosexual relations should be legal. By December, that number had dropped to 41 percent. The December poll found that Americans oppose "gay marriage" by an almost 2-to-1 margin (61 to 34 percent). They also oppose civil unions 54 to 39 percent.

Do the wishes of a clear and large majority make any difference? Not if the issue stays in the federal courts. The course that "gay marriage" will follow is predictable. Within ten years, we will have a national rule requiring "gay marriage" or something only rhetorically different. First, a gay couple, "married" in Massachusetts, will move to South Carolina and insist that the state, pursuant to the Full Faith and Credit Clause of the Constitution, recognize their Massachusetts "marriage." The state, citing the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) will argue that it need not recognize the Massachusetts law. After four or five years of litigation, the Supreme Court will find

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that the Full Faith and Credit Clause trumps DOMA. If the amendment President Bush favors is adopted, the same scenario will play out with "civil unions." Proponents of traditional marriage will then put all their resources into urging Congress to propose a constitutional amendment for the states to ratify. The effort will likely fail in the Senate, where it will be vetoed by a one-third negative vote. The *New York Times*, a few days after it becomes clear that the amendment will not get out of Congress, will report a victory for "equal rights" establishing that "gays should be allowed to marry" (reprising their editorial of January 13, 2004). Around 2014, the majority of Americans will realize that, once again, it has lost. In the meantime, however, the Republican Party will have a delicious issue designed, as they say, to "energize the base." Would the base be "energized" if it understood that the Party, in 2004, had the power to give it a win?

The statutory check can act as a safety valve to relieve pressure on the Court and on society as a whole.

Are the Supreme Court's decisions the last word? What can the majority do if it believes the Court is seriously out of line—or likely to be? Most people believe there are three choices: They can grumble but accept the decision, take the easy way, decide to live with it even though they do not like it; they can try to change the composition of the Supreme Court (an approach that is indirect, takes a long time, and, if history is any guide, does not work); or they can try to amend the Constitution.

The third choice, at first glance, sounds like a reasonable approach. If the proposed change is really popular, why not amend the Constitution? Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, after the *Lawrence* decision, proposed an amendment banning homosexual marriage. President Bush, last July, said he did not support an amendment at the moment because he was not sure it was "necessary." And, while the December *New York Times*/CBS News poll found strong support for such an amendment, it will never materialize.

The trouble with the amendment process is that Congress is the gatekeeper. Since World War II, seven amendments got out of Congress, and five were ratified. The two losers in the states were the Equal Rights Amendment and District of Columbia voting. Since the ratification of the Constitution, 10,000 amendments have been introduced, 33 have been passed out of Congress, and 27 have been ratified by the states. The casualty rate is so high because, before an amendment can be proposed to the states, it must pass two thirds of both houses of Congress. The House of Representatives, whose members are elected every two years, will approve any popular proposed amendment. One third of the Senate, by contrast, need not face the electorate for six years. Consequently, one third of the Senate can defeat any proposed amendment with a minimal risk of political retribution. If a proposed amendment gets out of the Senate, it needs to be ratified by three fourths of the states to become part of the Constitution. Three fourths of the states would almost certainly approve the amendment barring "gay marriage," but they will never get the chance, because Congress is institutionally hostile to limiting the power of any of the federal branches—which is exactly what most amendments seek to do. An amendment reversing a Supreme Court decision would, of course, be considered a sharp attack on the authority of that branch.

In recent decades, the ERA failed in the states, but most proposed amendments fail in the Senate. One-third minorities in the Senate have killed proposed amendments concerning term limits, school prayer, flag burning, busing, and a balanced budget. The states, quite likely, would have adopted those amendments if they had gotten out of Congress. The amendments may or may not be brilliant, but if three fourths of the states want to add them to the Constitution, it is hard to see why they cannot. That, however, is the nature of our amendment process. The process is so difficult that it is really a trap, wasting time and resources and, ultimately, frustrating those seeking the new amendment.

The big surprise is that the Constitution gives the majority a fourth choice. Previously known only to a few scholars, this fourth choice is a lot easier than the amendment process. Congress, by a simple statute, passed by majority vote, can effectively overturn any Supreme Court ruling. The decision itself, of course, binds the parties forever. The future impact of the case, however, is what people are worried about. Congress, under the Constitution, controls the Court's jurisdiction, and, if it believes a uniform national rule is not desirable, it can restore it to state authority. Congress could, for example, reenact the Defense of Marriage Act, restricting marriage to men and women, but adding one sentence: "This law is not subject to review by the lower federal courts or the U.S. Supreme Court." The issue would then return to the states, which is where President Bush and John Kerry, at times, have said it should be.

Article III of our Constitution provides that Congress determines the jurisdiction of the federal courts. Congress has the power to establish or abolish all federal courts except the Supreme Court, and the power to abolish includes the power to limit jurisdiction. Congress can also limit the Supreme Court's jurisdiction to "cases affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers, and Consuls, and those in which a State shall be a party." The Supreme Court has jurisdiction in all other cases only if Congress grants it by statute. Congress can remove, as it often has, any class of case from the lower federal courts and from the Supreme Court's appellate jurisdiction. Congress can even, as it did in the Reconstruction *McCardle* case, remove the Supreme Court's jurisdiction over a case that has already been argued.

Constitutional litigation would still take place—but in the state courts. The *state* supreme courts would have the last word. The state courts naturally would consider any prior U.S. Supreme Court decisions with respect. But they would not, according to Article VI of the Constitution, be bound by them. They are bound by the Constitution, not by the decisions of the Supreme Court. Moreover, new cases would always present somewhat different facts and issues than those previously decided by the Supreme Court. Congress could always, if state-court decisions go off the tracks, restore federal court jurisdiction.

Change by the statutory route is straightforward. If the op-

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ponents of a Supreme Court ruling can get Congress to enact a law removing federal-court jurisdiction and Supreme Court appellate jurisdiction, they can—by moving future constitutional litigation to the state courts—possibly change the outcome. They have at least changed the forum to one closer to home. If the opponents of a Supreme Court ruling cannot get a law passed to limit the Court's jurisdiction, they should relax, realize they are a minority, and attempt to persuade others to join them.

All sides should benefit from the availability of a democratic forum for debate. The Supreme Court would benefit, since it could no longer be accused of taking "sides in the culture war." Traditionally, abortion in the United States was a state issue. In 1970, New York, by a close vote, legalized abortion. By 1973, when the Supreme Court intervened in *Roe* v. *Wade*, 21 states had repealed or limited their criminal laws against abortion. The democratic progress toward consensus, however, stopped when the Court made the issue legal rather than political. Subsequently, because of the judicial setting, the positions of both sides stiffened into nonresolution. The travail that has followed could have been avoided if both sides had understood that the debate could be shifted from the courts to the Congress. Congress *today* could restore the issue to the states, which the enemies of *Roe*—such as the Republican Party—say they want. That raises an interesting question: Since the Republicans have a majority in both houses, and a President ready to sign the act, why do they not do it?

The Antifederalists, in our great 1787-88 constitutional debates, believed that a federal court would slowly, but steadily, enhance the powers of the national government of which it was a part. The other two federal branches, they also believed, having benefitted from the Court's centralizing rulings, would give the Supreme Court such a free rein that it might, in time, believe itself (in the words of the Antifederalist Brutus) "independent of Heaven itself." That all happened, as predicted.

As time went by, the representative branches discovered a new use for the Court. The hot-button cultural issues—so hazardous to a representative's reelection—could be shifted to the Court, which did not have to stand for reelection. Political-cultural issues are easily turned into legal issues. By this arrangement of convenience, the Court gains a lot of power as well as celebrity status. Public outrage, to them, is just water off a duck's back. The shift also worked very well for the representatives who, for practical purposes, are reelected for as long as they want the job. This, however, largely drains the political process of purpose and has brought the country into its present comical situation—where, if a political issue is at all controversial (campaign finance, school vouchers, status of foreigners captured in battle, *etc.*), the political branches may *propose*, but the last word, to approve or disapprove, is given by the unelected Court. This is not the constitutional system the Framers created for us.

We do not need to let the Supreme Court decide another issue in the culture war. The Constitution provides an easy, democratic check on the Court. The statutory check, as it becomes better known to the people, can act as a safety valve to relieve pressure on the Court and on society as a whole. The majority, as it begins to understand the fourth choice, can ask their representatives to start deciding hard issues again. Social change in a democracy, after all, should come through the give and take of the political process rather than through the decisions of nine wise people. c

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A League of Bushes

by Ben C. Toledano

"A politician . . . one that would circumvent God."
—William Shakespeare

American Dynasty: Aristocracy, Fortune and the Politics of Deceit in the House of Bush
by Kevin Phillips
New York: Viking Press;
397 pp., $25.95

◆

Initially, Kevin Phillips intended his new book, *American Dynasty*, to be a study of

> the Bush-related transformation of the U.S. presidency into an increasingly dynastic office, a change with profound consequences for the American Republic, given the factors of family bias, domestic special interests, and foreign grudges that the Bushes, father and son, brought into the White House.

As his extensive research progressed, the scope of his effort broadened considerably and became a careful study of four generations of the Bush family's deep and active involvement in "crony capitalism," the petroleum business, national-security and intelligence organizations and operations, investment banking, influence-wielding and -peddling, and the incestuous relationship between industry and government, particularly as it involves military preparedness and actions.

Old habits die hard, especially where the use of moral terminology is concerned. In the 1850's, James Smith Bush, George W.'s great-great-grandfather, graduated from Yale and became an Episcopal minister in New York. There is limited reference to the Reverend Bush in Phillips' book, but we have every reason to believe that he was a moral and spiritual man. He was the last male member of the Bush family not to devote his life to business, finance, oil, money, and politics. Nonetheless, the four generations that succeeded him have continued to stress their integrity in the most moral of terms. Since they ask us to believe that they are men committed to honor, integrity, and duty, it is fair to look into how well they have succeeded. Phillips writes:

H. Ward Sterett

> Before the election of 1988, George H.W. Bush had visited that year's Christian Booksellers' Association convention in Dallas to talk about *George Bush: Man of Integrity*, a book that discussed the family's close relationship with evangelists Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell. In 1995, at George W.'s gubernatorial inauguration, Billy Graham had referred to "the moral and spiritual example his mother and father set for us all."

Graham, that sycophant and spiritual advisor to any U.S. president willing to use him, has played an important role in the Bush saga. During the summer of 1985, Graham was visiting the Bushes at Kennebunkport and was able to help bring the lost soul, George W., "to God and salvation." That was the beginning of what we might call a marriage made in Heaven. Most of us are familiar with George W.'s "born again" experience; however, not until I read Phillips' book was I aware of Number 41's transformation.

> The son was not the only family member listening to the Religious Right. Campaign officials who shrugged off George W.'s influence on his father were ignoring the transformation of George and Barbara Bush. By the end of the summer of 1986, they had invited Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker for a visit, telling them how much they enjoyed watching *The P.T.L. Club* on television. The vice president also appeared at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University, and discussed his own born-again "life-changing experiences" in a video that was shown to evangelical leaders.

It seems, however, that the Lord spoke to George the Father in the most universal of terms, certainly broad enough to include Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church. Notwithstanding Big George's avowed acceptance of Jesus Christ as his

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Ben C. Toledano, a former Republican candidate for mayor of New Orleans and for the U.S. Senate, writes from Pass Christian, Mississippi.

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Personal Savior, Phillips reports that,

> During 1995 and 1996, two years after leaving the White House, he made at least nine paid appearances in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Tokyo, Washington, and elsewhere on behalf of Moon. The Korean businessman and evangelist, who dismissed Jesus as a failure and styled himself "the Lord of the Second Advent," was said to be paying the former president $100,000 per speech. . . . The forty-first president, who told Argentine president Carlos Menem that he had joined Moon in Buenos Aires for the money, had actually known the Korean reasonably well for decades. Their relationship went back to the overlap between Bush's one-year tenure as CIA director (1976) and the arrival in Washington of Moon, whose Unification Church was widely reported to be a front group for the South Korean Central Intelligence Agency.

I choose not to question the sincerity of George W.'s conversion and faith, however. Unlike his father, whose deeds defy and defile his words, he may well be a true believer even if he uses his beliefs to obtain political support and votes.

Last summer, the House and Senate Intelligence Committees prepared a joint report concerning September 11 and how it might have been prevented. Before the report was released, the Bush White House demanded certain deletions, including a 28-page section relating to the Saudis. However painful it is, I must agree this one time with Sen. Charles E. Schumer, who said, "There seems to be a systematic strategy of coddling and cover-up when it comes to the Saudis." The fact remains: Two U.S. presidents named Bush have been deeply and personally involved both commercially and politically in Saudi Arabia, one of the world's hottest spots.

Bush Sr.'s close ties to the Saudis go back at least to his brief CIA directorship in 1976, when his agency was helping to modernize Saudi intelligence, although it is difficult to believe that he had no contact with the Saudis during his 1971-72 service as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. As vice president and as chairman of the Reagan administration's task force on energy deregulation, Bush Sr. sought to upgrade his petroleum-industry credentials. Phillips exposes the many business and personal ties between the Bushes and the royal family of Saudi Arabia that continue until the present. So close was Bush Sr.'s relationship to the Saudis that "the Saudi ambassador in Washington, Prince Bandar, and his wife considered the Bushes 'almost family.'" Also, according to the authors of *The Outlaw Bank*, an account of the corrupt Bank of Credit and Commerce (BCCI), which involved prominent Saudi investors, Bush Sr. "was known throughout the Middle East as 'the Saudi Vice President.'" Kevin Phillips writes that "no other political family in the United States has had anything remotely resembling the Bushes' four decade relationship with the Saudi royal family and the oil sheiks of the Persian Gulf." All of the arrangements—"arms deals and oil deals and consultancies," according to William Hartung of the World Policy Institute—have made our government reluctant to investigate the Saudis.

The Carlyle Group was founded as a merchant bank or private equity house in 1987 and is unofficially valued at nearly $15 billion in funds under management. The group is so secretive that even highly competent and experienced reporters have difficulty explaining the exact nature of the enterprise. Investors invest in the various Carlyle funds—*e.g.*, the Carlyle Asian Investment Fund—which have holdings throughout the world in businesses that furnish military, security, and related goods and services to governments and their various agencies. The Carlyle Group is an integral part of the Military-Industrial-Government Complex and sells, among other things, its experience with government officials in the United States and around the world. Its motto could be "We are the whores who open the doors." Among the group's more prominent members are the arrogant and pompous former secretary of state and secretary of the treasury James A. Baker III; former secretary of defense and deputy director of the CIA Frank C. Carlucci; former White House budget advisor Richard Darman; and former U.S. president, vice president, and CIA director George Herbert Walker Bush. Among its high-profile non-U.S. members are former British prime minister John Major and former president of the Philippines Fidel Ramos. Bush Sr. and Major have made vast sums of money advising Carlyle where to invest overseas, establishing contacts with foreign leaders, and giving speeches on behalf of the group. Bush's speaking fees are then placed into his various Carlyle accounts. Until shortly after September 11, the Bin Laden family of Saudi Arabia had substantial investments in the Carlyle Group.

Every day, President Bush and his Cabinet make decisions that can financially benefit former President Bush and his cronies at Carlyle. And, in time, George W. figures to benefit from his father's investments. Without question, George H.W. Bush should have withdrawn completely from the Carlyle Group when his son became President.

Bush Sr., since leaving office, has traveled on behalf of Carlyle, most often to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf. He also helps recruit investors for the Carlyle funds. Phillips writes that 12 wealthy Saudi families and individuals, including the Bin Laden family, became investors before September 11. In 2002, the *Washington Post* reported that "Saudis close to Prince Sultan, the Saudi Defense Minister, were encouraged to put money into Carlyle as a favor to the elder Bush." And President Bush appointed a Texas lawyer named Robert Jordan ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Jordan, a partner in Houston's Baker Botts, the law firm of the Carlyle Group, represented George W. when he was investigated for insider trading with regard to his Harken Energy stock. One big cozy family: Bush Sr., Bush Jr., Baker (as in James A.) Botts, Jordan, and Carlyle.

Bush Sr.'s son Marvin appears to have done quite well in security-related businesses. Before September 11, World Trade Center security was handled for several years by Securacom (now Stratasec), a company in which Marvin was director and (along with the Kuwait-American Corporation) a major shareholder. "In 1997, security contracts with the World Trade Center and Washington's Dulles Airport brought in 75% of Securacom's revenues," according to Phillips. Shortly after September 11, Marvin became a large shareholder through his investment firm in Sybase, which put banks throughout the world in compliance with the anti-money-laundering provisions of the 2001 USA PATRIOT Act. Their service is called the "Sybase Patriot Compliance Solution." Homeland security has been quite profitable for those with close ties to federal departments and agencies.

Bush Sr.'s son Neil first gained notoriety as a director of the looted Silvera-

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do Savings and Loan. While on Silverado's board, Neil set up an "oil company" named JNB Explorations with two partners, Ken Good and Bill Walters, both contributors to his father's campaign. Neil overlooked telling his fellow board members at Silverado of his close connections to Good and Walters. While Neil, who received a $100,000 loan from Good with no obligation to pay it back, was on the board, Silverado made over $200 million in loans to Neil's partners in JNB. Those loans were largely defaulted, so we taxpayers know who paid them.

Son John Ellis Bush, better known as Governor Jeb, moved to Miami in 1980 and went into the investment and real-estate businesses. According to Phillips, Jeb participated "in controversial financing of office buildings through savings and loan institutions that later became insolvent." In 1985, with Armando Cordina, he bought an office building financed by Broward Federal Savings and Loan. When Broward failed a few years later, the federal Resolution Trust Corporation took over the defaulted Bush-Cordina loan. The two investors made a deal with the feds: In exchange for a payment of $500,000, the regulators agreed not to foreclose on the office building. The remaining loan of $4.1 million was paid for by—you guessed it—the taxpayers. A few million for Neil, a few million for Jeb, and, before you know it, we are talking about real money.

After the conclusion of Gulf War I and following Bush Sr.'s term as President, James A. Baker III and former Bush Sr. commerce secretary Robert Mosbacher were hired by Enron "under a joint consulting and investing arrangement" by which they would participate in the profits from any natural-gas projects they developed worldwide. On one of the Enron trips to Kuwait in 1993, Baker and Bush Sr. took along Marvin and Neil as lobbyists for Enron and for themselves.

Any other connections between Enron and the Bushes? Well, let's see: Bush Sr. and Ken Lay appear to have met in 1980. George W. claims that he first came to know Lay in 1987, but it could have been earlier. By Election Day 1988, Lay and the Bushes knew each other well. In order to realize his ambitions for Enron, Lay needed access to loans and insurance from the World Bank, the U.S. Export-Import Bank, and Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). In exchange for the great assistance President George H.W. Bush's administration had given Enron, Enron and its executives "labored mightily" for Bush in 1992. Lay was named co-chairman of the Bush Sr. reelection committee as well as chairman of that summer's Republican National Convention, to which Enron contributed $250,000.

As Bush Sr. was leaving office, Lay desperately wanted the Commodity Futures Trading Commission to exclude energy trading from CFTC oversight. Thanks to CFTC chairman Wendy Gramm, wife of Enron's close ally Sen. Phil Gramm, a normally lengthy process was raced through the commission just before the Clinton inauguration. There are five seats on the CFTC, two of which were temporarily vacant; the vote in favor of Enron was 2-1. Shortly thereafter, Wendy Gramm resigned from the CFTC and, about a month later, became a member of the Enron board of directors. Her compensation was calculated by Public Citizen at between $915,000 and $1,853,000 for the period of 1993-2001.

In 1996, Ken Lay played a leading role in trying to get the GOP presidential nomination for Phil Gramm. Gov. George W. Bush also backed Gramm. In 1994, Richard Kinder, Enron's president and chief operating officer, was Bush Jr.'s top Houston fundraiser. As soon as George W. was elected governor, he appointed Enron's choice, Patrick Wood, to head the Texas Public Utility Commission. Wood was a vigorous supporter of deregulation of electric utilities.

Enron's "friendliness" toward government agencies, domestic and foreign, paid off handsomely. Over a ten-year period, Enron was given $7.2 billion in publicly funded financing for 38 projects in 29 countries. Of that amount, U.S. agencies and development banks contributed $5.3 billion. Phillips writes:

> In 1999 and 2000, Enron's in-house lobbyists spent $3.4 million promoting a deregulation agenda in Congress, and the salaries of those registered came to nearly $1.6 million. At its peak, the company's Washington office staff was over one hundred strong, including former aides to House majority leader Dick Armey and the wife of House majority whip Tom Delay. When this kind of money spoke, national and state legislators listened.

In 2000, Enron, Lay, and Enron's Houston law firm, Vinson Elkins, were Bush Jr.'s biggest contributors. The Republican National Committee was not overlooked—it received $713,200 from Enron and its officers. It is alleged that half of Bush Jr.'s donors had close ties to Enron. And the scare in Florida was quashed by Enron's business partner, James A. Baker III.

Needless to say, new appointments were in order after Inauguration Day. Lay, along with three other major Bush contributors from Texas, was named to the five-member Energy Department transition team. Vice President Dick Cheney was chosen to lead the administration's energy-policy task force. Patrick Wood was appointed to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and soon after became its chairman. It seemed as if every one of Enron's choices was appointed: Glenn L. McCullough, chairman of TVA; Donald Evans, secretary of commerce; Theodore Kassinger (formerly of Vinson Elkins), Commerce Department general counsel; and many others including Robert Zoellick, Thomas White, Lawrence Lindsay, Karl Rove, and Marc Racicot.

Yet, in spite of the best-laid plans of rats and men, Enron went under. According to Phillips:

> While the comment made in June 2000 by Ken Lay that "no member of the Bush family has ever been on the Enron payroll" is almost certainly true, it is also irrelevant. Much larger amounts of money than ever changed hands in Teapot Dome reached the Bush family and their close political associates through multiple non-payroll routes: hard-dollar political campaign contributions, soft-dollar party contributions, consulting fees, joint investing agreements, funding for presidential libraries, lucrative speech payments, contributions to the costs of inaugurals, hypothesized Enron purchases of Bush-owned gas production, oil-well partnerships, and possibly even some of those off-the-books arrangements scattered around the world's many tax havens.

There was a time when people in high places believed in avoiding even the appearance of impropriety. Phillips' book suggests that the Bushes do not even know what propriety is.

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As Long as I'm Doing It

by James O. Tate

The Shape of a Man: A Novella and Five Stories
by Randall Ivey
Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc.; 121 pp., $10.95

The Mutilation Gypsy and Other Stories
by Randall Ivey
Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc.; 157 pp., $13.95

◆

Writing—literary creation in the fullness of the sense that we have known it in the previous century and even in the one before, from the French and Russian masters, the daft Irish, the mad Yankees, the haunted Southerners (and from elsewhere, of course)—sometimes seems to be on the way out. Senses of language, of irony, of place, of reality, appear to have been dulled or even eradicated by education and cable television. Contemplation does not square with institutionalized victimology, nor does listening jibe with noise. Or, as a thoughtful man put it the other day, "American literature is over." "It's not over," I replied. "Maybe it's just that Americans aren't writing it any more. I can't remember what Edward Said said, but Yogi Berra said, 'It's not over till it's over.'"

From what I can perceive from these collections of short fiction, there is a certain identifiable quality that emanates. *The Shape of a Man* includes the story "Laissez Faire Redux," in which the first thing that springs to mind today when you say "South Carolina" is treated fictionally and dramatically and humorously, not politically or ideologically. The question of flying the flag, or which flag, is resolved in a demonstration of the shared Southern culture known to both races in their familiar history, music, and flag—a point easily understood by those who know a culture from the inside and baffling to ideologues who do not. That is much, but even better is the first paragraph: "It was a mistake to get cable television, just like it was a mistake to get a brother-in-law, because when you put the two of them together, there is no peace for me." Such a sense of voice tells us that we will hear a story, not a diatribe.

The next story in that volume is set in Manhattan, as a man tells a story about how his perception of a socialite changed. And the next is narrated by a woman of a certain age, the fourth by a younger one, as both confront erotic challenges. The novella, "The Shape of Man," a gothic tale of violence, is set in the 1950's. The last story, in the third person, concerns a woman who memorializes her son, dead in World War II. In short, we see from Randall Ivey various angles of attack: different decades, classes, sexes, and tonalities. Ivey seems to be attracted to obsessed personalities, and he adjusts his language effortlessly to whatever the requirement might be.

The stories in *The Mutilation Gypsy* are even more varied. Two ghost stories, "Son" and "The Book and the Computer," are so different from each other in diction, tone, and conception that we would be hard-pressed to know that they were written by the same author. "The Present Unpleasantness" is a satirical treatment of contemporary South Carolina that has little in common with either the experimental "Sunset" or the fable "Appassionata." The title story recurs to the realm of the Southern grotesque and the traditional subject of growing up through experience. As a collection, *The Mutilation Gypsy* shows that Ivey can do just about anything and that he finds inspiration all around.

This author has declared that his work has a center, that it derives, even in variety, from an identifiable location.

> Most of these stories . . . are grounded in very familiar environs, the South Carolina upcountry, where I have lived, save for my college years, practically all my life. Early on I set out as my life's work the depiction of my fellow upper Carolinians in a cycle of short stories and novels set in the apocryphal Compton County, a cotton mill town of my own imagining, populated by mill hands and farmers and bankers and preachers and politicians both honest and suspect and academics and illiterates and poets manqué and renegade movie directors and transplanted Yankees and scalawags of all sorts and young folks striving to get out of their home country or remaining and trying to make sense of it and old folks who have not yet settled down to enjoy their twilight years but are still pursuing life with fierce appetites.

Ivey's declaration makes sense as an introduction to his work and also as a response to the experience of it.

Randall Ivey, who professes writing and literature at the University of South Carolina at Union, has, in all probability, developed views on the state of writing today. Even so, his practice is itself quite a statement about the craft and the possibilities of writing—one that says, among other things, "It's not over." Randall Ivey is among those few so possessed by vision and word and voice that he might say with Flannery O'Connor's Hazel Motes, "They ain't quit doing it as long as I'm doing it."

James O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.

Worrying the Southern Bone

by Katherine Dalton

Minding the South
by John Shelton Reed
Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press; 291 pp., $9.00

◆

Longtime readers of *Chronicles* are familiar with John Shelton Reed, who used to write a column for this magazine. Those less familiar may recall the occasional news story based on the latest intelligence-gathering done by the University of North Carolina's Center for the Study of Southern Culture, which Professor Reed founded. Well-known among his fellow Southern sociologists, he has had several brushes with wider fame as the man behind the concept of Death cigarettes (which either were, or nearly were, nationally marketed) and the author of the keynote essay for the 1996 Atlanta Olympics' official program, explaining the South to foreigners. Over the course of a full career, most of it spent at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, John Shelton Reed has published widely—from monographs to collections of his *Chronicles* column. This book apparently collects everything else—book

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reviews, essays, addresses, the odd interview and movie review—and fans of Professor Reed will enjoy it very much.

As it is heavy on book reviews, this collection may be regarded as an interestingly eclectic, heavily annotated, and necessarily brief booklist of three decades' worth of Southern reading, ranging from Norman Yetman's *Life Under the "Peculiar Institution": Selections from the Slave Narrative Collection* (which Reed reviewed in 1973) to works by Mel Bradford and C. Vann Woodward, and thence diverging to Florence King, Tony Horowitz, and John Connally. Though, as a reviewer, John Reed has made it his standard practice to be either kind or silent, included here is one damning review (of the error-ridden *The South* by B.C. Hall and C.T. Wood), which illustrates why knowledgeable and responsible reviewers must occasionally sharpen their hatchets. Reviewing is so prone to either fatuous praise or sophomoric invective that it is refreshing to see how a polite yet justifiably skewering review ought to be done.

It is something, I think, to be able to boast that the author of *Roll, Jordan, Roll* once lived above your garage. (Eugene Genovese's 1995 collection *The Southern Front* Reed reviews here.) Reed has a good appreciation of Louisa McCord, a South Carolina writer and polemicist who had a remarkable career before and during the War Between the States and who deserves to be much better remembered than she is. Though this book is not as full of amusing oddities as some of Reed's other collections are, it has its share of them; and everywhere you will find displays of Reed's good humor and wit, which must have made him a standout at all those sociological meetings and which transfer nicely to the printed page.

There are several personal pieces added as well, in which we learn about his mixed ancestry (he had a Yankee mother), his love for the Episcopal Church, and his roots in Republican Tennessee, which explain most fully, perhaps, his tenacious allegiance to the G.O.P. We also hear about his road to Southern studies, a winding path that led him through MIT and Columbia. For his Columbia dissertation, the young Reed reanalyzed 30 years' worth of Gallup poll data that he expected would show the disappearance of regional differences in Dixie as the South urbanized. What he found, however, was the opposite—the South was holding on to her own ways and opinions as hard as ever—and his explanation for why that was gave him the clue to an understanding of Southernness that has shaped, he says, much of his career.

In myriad ways, with its 45 pieces published over 30 years, *Minding the South* raises the questions that John Reed has been mulling all his life. As he puts it in his essay on *Confederates in the Attic*: "What does it mean to be 'Southern'—if, indeed, it means anything these days? Is there one 'Southern heritage' or many? Who gets to decide what that phrase means?" Finally, he adds, "How are we going to deal with a past that, like most people's, is a mixture of triumph and tragedy, grandeur and squalor, oppression and accomplishment?" John Shelton Reed seems to think that you cannot read too much, or ask too many questions, or love the admirable too much, or laugh too long at the absurd. It is a method well worthy of its subject.

Katherine Dalton writes from New Castle, Kentucky.

Looking for a Good Book?
Read
The Chronicles Booklog
at *www.ChroniclesMagazine.org*

A Stand-up Guy

by Janet Scott Barlow

My Prison Without Bars
by Pete Rose, with Rick Hill
New York: Rodale Press;
288 pp., $24.95

◆

What is Pete Rose's explanation for failing to remember, throughout his life, his mother's birthday? "I just can't seem to concentrate on things I'm not interested in."

Ever since the news broke that Pete Rose was ready, after 14 years of lies, to admit what most people already believed—that, yes, he did bet on baseball—the sports world, and territories beyond, have been obsessed with the story. The fullness of Rose's confession can be found in his new book, *My Prison Without Bars* (written with Rick Hill). The book begins with Rose's desire to clear things up before heading off for "the big dirt-nap"; and it ends with his resolution to leave his pre-nap future in the hands of "the big Umpire in the sky."

As for what Rose has to say in the intervening pages . . . well, where to start? The book is one huge detonation of denial, blame-shifting, contradiction, and defensiveness, not to mention screaming ego, utter obtuseness, colossal—even awesome—self-absorption, and total macho b.s. It is shocking without being engaging, hilarious without being funny, and believable without possessing the slightest hint of emotional truth. To experience 322 pages of Pete Rose's personality is to be in the presence of a man whose mind is inside out: Everything is positioned directly opposite its proper place. To endure the logic of *My Prison Without Bars* is to understand anew the meaning of the phrase *beside the point*. Rose's idea of being a stand-up guy: "Throughout my life, if I did something wrong, whether it was making an error [on the field] or cheating on my wife—I took responsibility." Rose's explanation for avidly spending 40 years' worth of free time losing money at racetracks: "I reckon you might call me 'a creature of habit.'" Rose's reasoning as to why, even now, as he seeks reinstatement in Major League Baseball, he will not stop gambling: "Hell, nobody said I had to become a monk!" And oh, what a task now faces the big Umpire in the sky. One imagines him staring blankly at the celestial walls and muttering, "Sinners I can handle. But boneheads . . . "

Pete Rose exhibits two fundamental problems, neither of which is interesting within the context of his personality. Both are compelling, however, when seen as reflections of our current cultural condition.

Rose's first problem is that he is constitutionally incapable of accepting the fact that two plus two equals four. He cannot absorb the principle of cause and effect. The effect with which he struggles is his banishment from Major League Baseball. The cause was his betting on Major League Baseball. The foundation of the circumstance that generates his misery is MLB's legendary Rule 21, the most famous commandment in all of sports: "Any player . . . who shall bet any sum whatsoever upon any baseball game in connection with which the bettor has a duty to perform shall be declared permanently ineligible." Rose broke that rule—with a vengeance, it turns out—and suffered the consequences. His response to

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that thoroughly unambiguous instance of cause and effect is the angry refrain of his book: "The punishment didn't fit the crime!"

In other words, two plus two does not equal four. It equals 7 or 12 or 31—whatever sum convenience or desire dictates. Rose wants what he wants because he wants it. He wants what he wants because politicians get away with corruption and celebrities get away with lies; because athletes in other sports get away with drug addiction and spousal abuse (behavior that, Rose implies, makes compulsive gambling by comparison a positively healthy form of recreation), and because ordinary citizens get away with things that famous people cannot. He wants what he wants because he is Pete Rose, and despite the fact that he is Pete Rose. He wants what he wants because there *has* to be a way to get it, and, if there is not a way, there should be.

If Rose's perspective sounds familiar, that is because, while extreme in him, it is not unique to him. The fact is, we live more and more in a Roseian world, a place where two plus two does not always equal four because—well, who the hell says it has to? We see around us the creeping application of a new syllogism: Being stigmatized is wrong; rules are stigmatizing; therefore, rules, by their nature, are unjust. Furthermore, no matter what you have done, it is not *that* bad because there is someone somewhere who has done something worse.

America is now divided pretty much between the Roseians and the non-Roseians, and, in such an atmosphere, it is not surprising that the Rose case stimulates heated debate, even outside the sports world. It is bigger than baseball because it offers uncomplicated, even streamlined, consideration of personal responsibility. It is a metaphor for our times, one of the cleanest possible encapsulations of the question *Do the rules matter?* (For those keeping score: The non-Roseians are being steadily inched toward defeat.)

Pete Rose's second problem is that he is constitutionally incapable of engaging in what has become the required public ritual for celebrity rehabilitation.

There was a time when public figures who found themselves in trouble went into lockdown mode: Don't be seen; don't be heard; hide out and hope it all blows over. Sadly, those wonderful days are gone. The contemporary method for handling a public-relations crisis requires a sequential series of specific maneuvers. The drill has become universal and applies equally to politicians, film stars, sports figures, and corporate honchos. The drill's all-important final move demands, as we know all too well, the public—*i.e.*, televised—spilling of guts and tears, along with great showy displays of both remorse and wounded innocence. And the more humiliating and self-debasing, the better. This spectacle is now the unavoidable price a cornered celebrity must pay for the chance to be allowed back into the public's good graces.

Of course, nothing in the ritual requires the celebrity actually to *be* remorseful. The consideration of real remorse—felt contrition—simply is not part of the drill. What the ritual requires is that the display be *sufficient*—sufficient to give us, the public, a sense of power. Examples are ubiquitous. On one side, you have, say, some huge ex-NBA star, ginning up tears and self-regret for Barbara Walters, finally putting the cherry on the sundae by turning and blubbering into his wife's bosom. On the other side, you have the public (and the media), its most cynical instincts aroused, smugly scoring the performance: *Not enough, Mr. Bigshot, not enough. A little more . . . a little more . . . still more. There! Yes! You are now blubbering into your wife's bosom. I declare you sufficiently demeaned and your performance a success. Go forth and blubber no more.*

Pete Rose's strategy for getting back into Major League Baseball has blown up in his face not because he lacks contrition but because he will not fake contrition. He is the Gary Condit of sports. Both sportswriters and fans are in a state of agitation with Rose because he is either too stupid or too stubborn to debase himself. Says Rose, in a much-quoted passage from his book, "I'm sure that I'm supposed to act all sorry or sad or guilty now that I've accepted that I've done something wrong. But you see, I'm just not built that way." Personally, I doubt Rose truly has accepted that he has done something wrong (he is not built *that* way, either), but that is not his problem. His problem is that he has denied those on the other side their rightful role in dispensing absolution. Say what you will (and I have said plenty over the years), Pete Rose is not a guy who is going to go publicly blubbering into his wife's bosom. And for that—not for the betting on baseball—he will not soon be forgiven.

And therein lies the irony of Rose's dilemma. When he finally accepts (on whatever level) the traditional concept of cause and effect, he is undone by its modern counterpart. He waits 14 years to offer a confession, only to be blindsided by the fact that what is required of him is a performance. In his book, Rose talks repeatedly of his lifelong desire to "give the fans their money's worth." What he cannot or will not grasp is that his confession is being judged by showbiz standards, and emotionalism is the currency of our times. In this system, everyone counts as a fan, and no fan will have gotten his money's worth until Rose has been sufficiently humbled.

Pete Rose wants what he wants, and he wants it bad. He wants to be in the Baseball Hall of Fame, and he wants (horrors) another shot at managing a Major League team. What he does not want is to have to "act [*act*] all sorry or sad or guilty." So the guy is in a bind, and we will just have to wait and see whether a man so self-absorbed and lacking sentiment that he cannot remember his mother's birthday can bring himself to pull out the stops and do the full-blown contrition dance.

I am not banking on it. The thing about boneheads is that they are nothing if not predictable. And with that, let us thank the big Umpire in the sky for small favors.

Janet Scott Barlow is the author of The Nonpatriotic President: A Survey of the Clinton Years *(Chronicles Press).*

Fire the Nanny

by Fr. Michael P. Orsi

FDR's Folly: How Roosevelt and His New Deal Prolonged the Great Depression
by Jim Powell
New York: Random House; 274 pp., $27.50

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Even under a "conservative" President, government entitlements continue to grow. President George W. Bush's expansion of Medicare to include prescription drugs will add billions to the already overinflated budget. And, despite warnings from Alan Greenspan that Social Security is on the verge of default, neither political party is willing to address the issue. Americans have grown

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accustomed to the "nanny" state, which has had, according to Jim Powell, a deleterious effect on human freedom, economic well-being, and common sense that few dare to question.

Powell is an historian and a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. His revisionist examination of FDR's New Deal is an assessment of the major players who formed policy during the Roosevelt era and refutes the lingering myth that government programs, public projects, and monetary regulations are good for society. He shows that America, then and now, would have been better off had the New Deal never been implemented. He argues that *laissez-faire* capitalism is cyclical in nature, with a natural ability to rebound, and that government intervention effectively stifles initiative and recovery. He convincingly argues that the New Deal prolonged the Great Depression. His impressive display of hard data supports his conclusion.

The current outsourcing of American jobs serves as a *prima facie* example of how New Deal legislation continues to hurt American businesses. Because of the high cost of American labor, employers are now moving jobs to foreign markets where labor is cheaper. Powell shows this to be the result of minimum-wage legislation and closed-shop union membership, both promoted by Roosevelt. Powell says that these policies deny Americans their fundamental right to freedom of contract and stifle fair-market competition. He demonstrates that, during the Depression, these policies actually increased unemployment, especially among black workers in Southern textile mills. He chronicles the strong-arm activities of unions, the United Auto Workers in particular, that negotiated above-market wages for their members, resulting in General Motors dismissing one quarter of its employees and overall U.S. car production dropping 50 percent between 1937 and 1938. This situation continues today. Recently, union-negotiated healthcare and retirement benefits have raised the cost of G.M. cars $1,400 per vehicle, endangering sales and undermining the automaker's competitiveness against foreign companies.

Powell argues that the 1935 Social Security Act, the centerpiece of New Deal legislation, was unfair and unsound: a pyramid scheme that takes workers' money without the adequate compensation that private investment would garner. The actuarial charts tell the sad tale of Uncle Sam's Robin Hood effort. Social Security contributions are now America's biggest tax, yet projected returns continue to decline. Even worse, Powell writes, according to the majority opinion of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Fleming* v. *Nestor* (1960), nobody has a contractual right to Social Security benefits. Furthermore, Powell argues, high Social Security taxes have caused many employers to cut their workforces, causing even greater unemployment.

Powell's book provides much food for thought regarding how we arrived at our present indenturedness to big government, including how many New Deal-era U.S. Supreme Court decisions allowed the government to usurp our economic freedoms. He shows that the present caretaker state whittles away at our fundamental liberties and limits productivity. Powell's book deserves the careful attention of all those involved in public policy and of Christians who support government programs in the belief that they foster social justice: If anything, these programs have hurt, more then helped, the poor and disenfranchised.

Fr. Michael P. Orsi is a research fellow in law and religion at Ave Maria School of Law in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Till Earth Was But a Name

by Patrick J. Walsh

John Clare: A Biography
by Jonathan Bate
New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 672 pp., $40.00

"I AM": The Selected Poetry of John Clare
edited by Jonathan Bate
New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 344 pp., $17.00

◆

Poet John Clare (1793-1864) seems to have grown from the soil. His last name derives from the word *clayer*—someone who manures and enriches clay. As a farm laborer, he drew sustenance from the earth. Immersed in humus, he learned the humility so necessary to creativity. His poems, like furrow lines, break the surface of things to expose the extraordinary aspect of the ordinary. Delighting in common things—birds, flowers, trees, blades of grass—Clare revels in their simple mystery. It is an art that captures the first day forever dawning.

John Clare was born in Helpston in Northamptonshire, a small village largely undisturbed since the Middle Ages. People kept the old ways and customs, shared the common land, and still observed the pre-Reformation calendar that celebrated all the seasonal festivals. Life was in rhythm with nature, in an era before the Enclosure Acts took their toll and radically reconstructed English rural life.

The Clare family subsisted as farm laborers, living on potatoes and water gruel. When only seven, Clare had a job looking after sheep and geese. At 12, he worked the fields. Never robust in health or temperament, he stood barely five feet five inches, a small, sensitive plant. One reviewer who visited him at Northborough sanitarium described his eyes as "light blue and flashing with genius."

Clare was reared in an oral tradition of stories and songs. His parents were admired as local storytellers: Clare's father once said he could sing over a hundred songs. When his workday was finished, Clare studied reading and writing in night classes. At 13, he came across Thompson's poem "Seasons" and was immensely influenced by it. Thereafter, he read every book he could find, recited poetry to himself in the fields, and wrote verses of his own on discarded scraps of paper.

Jonathan Bate does a fine job in reacquainting us with this sadly neglected Romantic poet. The noted Shakespeare scholar spent five years among Clare's vast archive, determined to fill a void by giving "the one major English poet never to have received a biography worthy of his memory" his due. Bate has succeeded absolutely in his prescribed biographical task.

Published alongside this biography is a companion volume containing a wider selection of poems. *I AM* takes its title from one of Clare's most anthologized poems:

I am—yet what I am, none cares or
knows;
My friends forsake me like a
memory lost:
I am the self-consumer of my woes;
They rise and vanish in oblivion's
host

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Like shadows in love's frenzied
stifled throes:
And yet I am and live as vapours
tossed.

"I AM" was written at the Northampton general lunatic asylum, to which Clare was committed in 1841. Here he spent the rest of his life imagining at times that he was Lord Byron or a prizefighter or that he was married to his childhood sweetheart, Mary, who was a kind of elusive muse for him. What happened to Clare and what he suffered from is still open to speculation. Bate says, "if Clare were alive and receiving psychiatric treatment today he would probably be diagnosed as suffering from manic depression." Another doctor's diagnosis mentions exhaustion from "years spent addicted to poetical prosings."

The world seemed to close in on poor Clare. After his initial success as a poet with the publication of *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* in 1820, Clare married, as his publishers Taylor and Hessey, ever mindful of the example of Robert Burns, had urged him to do. (Clare, like Burns, was overly fond of women and drink.) Patty Turner and John Clare had seven children. Some of the local nobility helped with a generous income of 45 pounds per year, but that was not enough to support Clare's household, which included his parents

Clare's second volume made a respectable showing. In London, he met Coleridge, Lamb, De Quincy, and Hazlitt, but the "peasant poet" rapidly fell out of fashion and was left between two worlds. Looking out of his coach at the laborers in the field, he wrote,

> The novelty created strange feelings that I could almost fancy that my identity as well as my occupation had changed—that I was not the same John Clare, but that some stranger had jumped into my skin.

Clare drove himself hard to support his growing family and never ceased writing poetry. Prolific as his output was, his books never sold enough to bring the income he needed.

And the fields he loved were being enclosed for the sake of the industrial efficiency of capitalist agriculture. Between 1760 and 1815, some seven million acres of English common land were made private.

Fence now meets fence in owners'
little bounds
Of field and meadow large as
garden grounds,
In little parcels little minds to
please
With men and flocks imprisoned,
ill at ease.

The chase of money was in full swing along with the Enlightenment project to reduce all of Creation to a base materialism. A genuine poet, Clare stood against this cloying conformity. "I am as far as politics is concerned for King and Country—no Innovations in Religion and government say I." Yet Clare saw the rapid change around him. He was surrounded by a new people, who "Deem all as rude their kindred did of yore" and who engage in "Affecting high life's airs to scorn the past / Trying to be something makes them nought at last."

Tormented by what he called "blue devils" and the encroaching ache of modernity, Clare took refuge in his own world.

Old custom! O I love the sound,
However simple they may be—
Whate'er with time hath sanction
found
Is welcome and is dear to me—
Pride grows above simplicity
And spurns them from her haughty
mind
And soon the poet's song will be
The only refuge they can find.

Clare's work is only now receiving the attention it deserves. His "Shepherds Calendar," Bate argues, "is one of the greatest poems of the nineteenth century." With this new biography and selection of poems, Clare's work is lifted into the realm of the eternal.

A Vision

I lost the love of heaven above;
I spurned the lust of earth below;
I felt the sweets of fancied love,
And hell itself my only foe.

I lost earth's joys but felt the glow
Of heaven's flame abound in me;
Till loveliness and I did grow
The bard of immortality.

I loved but woman fell away;
I hid me from her faded fame:
I snatched the sun's eternal ray
And wrote till earth was but a
name.

In every language upon earth,
On every shore, o'er every sea,
I gave my name immortal birth
And kept my spirit with the free.

Patrick J. Walsh is a writer in Quincy, Massachusetts.

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by Samuel Francis

A Question of Power

Movies come and movies go, but probably never in the history of American film has more controversy greeted any movie than that which met Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* before and after its debut on Ash Wednesday. We all know what the controversy was about. It had nothing to do with the qualities of the film as film (it was average, as are all of Mr. Gibson's movies), the acting (with the possible but minor exception of the fellow who played Pontius Pilate, there was no acting to speak of), the dialogue (who can possibly tell, except the handful of philologists who could follow the Latin and Aramaic?), or the plot (depending on your religious views, either there was none or it was the Greatest Story Ever Told). The controversy had to do with whether Gibson's film was really antisemitic, and, while a good many Christians and gentiles said it was, the principal accusers along these lines were Jewish.

The Jewish attacks on *The Passion* were (no pun intended) catholic in their universality—they included Jews of the political left and Jews of the political right (or the neoconservatism that nowadays is called "right-wing"), devout Jews and secular Jews, religiously liberal Jews and religiously Orthodox Jews. One of the principal authors of the attacks was Abe Foxman, head of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, which is about as close to Orwell's Thought Police as anything that currently exists in this country. Mr. Foxman, to whom a script of the Gibson film was leaked long before it appeared in theaters, and who actually sneaked into a showing under false pretenses, was undoubtedly the movie's biggest enemy and played a major role in instigating other attacks. Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post*, who found the film "fascistic" (as well as "anti-Semitic"; Mr. Cohen may not make the distinction, but Mussolini certainly did), assured his readers that he really did not want to see it at all, but "I went to see it only as part of my job, wishing that the Anti-Defamation League and other critics had simply ignored it." Apparently, Mr. Cohen believes his job includes doing what the ADL tells him to do. He is certainly not the only one.

The level of attacks was such that Sharon Waxman, the *New York Times* film reporter, ran a piece with the headline, "New Film May Harm Gibson's Career" on February 26, the day after the movie opened, and she quoted Jewish movie bigs David Geffen and Jeffrey Katzenberg of DreamWorks as telling her (each refused to speak for attribution), "It doesn't matter what I do. I will do something. I won't hire [Gibson]. I won't support anything he's part of. Personally that's all I can do." In Hollywood, of course, such modest efforts by major producers are more than enough to assist world-famous stars in making quick career transitions to working as pizza delivery boys.

Whatever the threats to Gibson's future employment by Mr. Geffen and/or Mr. Katzenberg, the debut of the film did not help much. Mr. Cohen was by no means the only Jewish critic who became what he called "uneasy" when he actually worked up the guts to go see it. "Dangerous," an editorial in the *New York Daily News* shuddered. "Unambiguously contrived to vilify Jews," Frank Rich wrote in the *New York Times*. Gibson "has chosen to give millions of people the impression that Jews are culpable for the death of Jesus," Leon Wieseltier concluded in the *New Republic*, while William Safire moaned about "Gibson's medieval version of the suffering of Jesus, reveling in savagery to provoke outrage and cast blame." Neoconservative Charles Krauthammer shrieked about "Gibson's Blood Libel" and found proof of the film's demonization of Jews in the lurking presence of the figure of Satan "merging with, indeed, defining the murderous Jewish crowd." Of course, as anyone who has seen the film knows, Satan is also "merging" with Jesus himself in the Garden of Gethsemane during the film's opening scenes, trying to prevent Him from going through with the crucifixion at all. The point is that Satan does not want God's Son to sacrifice Himself for mankind's sins, and, when Christ dies, Satan screams in rage and agony. In any case, who exactly would you expect Satan to be lurking among in downtown Jerusalem? They just didn't have too many Palestinians back then.

Almost all of the commentary about *The Passion of the Christ*'s supposed vilification of Jews was on the same sophomoric and transparently false level. Jami Bernard, film critic for the *New York Daily News*, opened her review of February 24 with the line, "Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is the most virulently anti-Semitic movie made since the German propaganda films of World War II" and, a week later, was complaining about the "week of real hatred" she had endured from all the antisemitic Christians who wrote her what she called "nasty and unprintable letters."

If the nasty and unprintable attacks that critics such as Miss Bernard launched did not muzzle the movie, maybe the cops could do it. By early March, the *New York Post* reported, the head of the NYPD's "Hate Crimes Unit" ordered his squad to go see the film just in case, and, a few days later, a "Jewish advocacy group" calling itself the "Messiah Truth Project" asked the U.S. Department of Justice to "utilize civil, criminal, and federal hate crime laws" against the film. And you thought I was joking about the Thought Police.

There were, of course, eminent Jewish writers and critics who defended the movie, such as Rabbi Daniel Lapin, founder of Toward Tradition, a politically conservative Jewish organization, and Orthodox Jewish film critic Michael Medved; by far, however, the overwhelming response from Jewish journalists, film critics, Hollywood powerhouses, and the leaders and spokesmen of the organized Jewish community was, to put it mildly, negative.

It is not my purpose here to discuss in any detail the merits or flaws of their attacks. Not only Lapin and Medved but any number of Christian writers (Pat Buchanan, Joe Sobran, and Cal Thom-

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as, among others) have already done that. The essence of the Jewish attacks is that Gibson's movie recapitulates the "blood libel" that "the Jews murdered Christ" and that Jews today are morally culpable, a doctrine most Jewish writers insist has led to Christian persecution of Jews for centuries and helped shaped German National Socialist views of the Jews but which the Catholic Church repudiated in 1965.

In fact, there is nothing in the Gibson movie that states or even suggests that "all Jews" were responsible for the execution of Jesus. The film does show the Jewish priesthood of the day engineering the execution for their own doctrinal and political reasons and badgering, cajoling, and implicitly threatening Pilate to carry it out. That is perfectly consistent with the only historical source we have about the events and with Pope Paul VI's 1965 *Nostra aetate*, which explicitly stated, "The Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ."

As for the "blood libel" itself, whatever its historical sources, it was hardly the only reason for medieval antisemitism (let alone any cause at all of the long history of anti-Jewish violence among the Greeks, Romans, and other pre-Christian nations), nor does it find any expression in Gibson's film, the emphasis of which is explicitly on Christ's forgiveness of His killers and the responsibility of all humans for His death. Despite the claims of writers such as Krauthammer that Gibson "openly rejects the Vatican II teaching" that the Jews had nothing to do with the execution, there is nothing in the movie that contradicts the pope's statement that "what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today."

That, of course, is the point that Safire (along with most other Jewish critics) missed. Safire wrote in his column that

> The villains at whom the audience's outrage is directed are the actors playing bloodthirsty rabbis and their rabid Jewish followers. This is the essence of the medieval "passion play," preserved in pre-Hitler Germany at Oberammergau, a source of the hatred of all Jews as "Christ killers."

Aside from the questionable claim that the audience's "outrage" is "directed" at anyone and the dubious assumption that the Nazis were really influenced by a medieval Christian drama, Mr. Safire's central boo-boo is his confusion of the historical role of a particular group of Jewish leaders (a role no one really denies and which there is no good reason to deny, assuming we accept even generally the New Testament account) with the supposed theological and ethical guilt that is said to have caused or shaped or influenced antisemitic violence through the ages. Mr. Safire and most other Jewish critics are arguing that you cannot accept the one without implying or embracing the other, and that is simply false. It is like saying that, if you note that Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and several other communist spies of the 1940's were Jews, you are accusing Jews today or all Jews of being communist spies.

Fallaciously lumping the historic guilt of specific persons 2,000 years ago with a universal moral culpability today, which is what Safire and most other Jewish critics of the Gibson movie did, leads to a further inference—perfectly logical—that the New Testament account, and therefore the heart of Christianity itself, is antisemitic and must be excised or expurgated. In this kind of thinking, it is not just Mr. Gibson's movie that is likely to get a visit from the Hate Crimes Squad but your local Sunday school.

That is precisely the burden of a claim made by a rabbi whom Rabbi Lapin debated over the film:

> We have a responsibility as Jews, as thinking Jews, as people of theology, to respond to our Christian brothers and to engage them, be it Protestants, be it Catholics, and say, look, this is not your history, this is not your theology, this does not represent what you believe in.

It is the responsibility of Jews, in other words, to decide what Christians should believe about history and theology, and, if it offends Jews, it has to go.

The arrogance of that claim puts most of the invective heaped on Mel Gibson rather in the shade, but it is not very different from it, and it also points to a further inference about what is going on in the controversy surrounding *The Passion of the Christ*. An Orthodox Jewish friend of mine spotted it immediately in a comment he made to me soon after seeing the movie himself and dismissing the charges of antisemitism as preposterous. "It's all a put on, isn't it?" he remarked. "None of the guys claiming it's antisemitic really believes that. It's really just a question of power. That's all."

It is indeed a question of power because entirely apart from the theological, historical, and aesthetic merits of the Gibson film is the question of controlling the public culture, the way of life that defines American society and establishes public standards by which behavior, discussion, and thought are regulated. You probably do not have to accept Christopher Dawson's view that "a living religion always aspires to be the centre round which the whole culture revolves" to grasp that religion is invariably a powerful force in defining a culture and that it is no coincidence that the words *cult* and *culture* both derive from the Latin *cultus*. The religion a society accepts—publicly, regardless of what its members privately believe—is what defines its morals and its patterns of what is and is not legitimate.

The angry controversy about *The Passion* is about which *cultus* will define American culture, and the conflict over the movie is a struggle for cultural power, for what Antonio Gramsci called "cultural hegemony." Rabbi Jacob Neusner has remarked that Auschwitz has replaced Sinai in the religious sensibilities of many modern secularized Jews, and the bitter and hysterical war against Mel Gibson represents a further attempted displacement—that Auschwitz replace Calvary, that Christianity itself as Americans understand and accept it be defined and regulated by contemporary Jewish standards and those cultural hegemons who enforce them.

Mel Gibson's answer to this demand, in effect, was *To hell with you. I'm going to offer this country and the world my own religion, and you have nothing to say about it.*

And that is what everybody is angry about. Gibson is directly challenging the Jewish claim to define—and the Jewish power to define—a Christianity and an American culture informed by it that is acceptable to Jews.

And since, by the time the Hate Crime Squads were about to show up at the theater doors, he had already raked in more than $300 million from the film and some 64 percent of the American public had already seen and very much liked his movie or said they were planning to see it, his answer appears to have been one that an immense number of Americans found compelling. c

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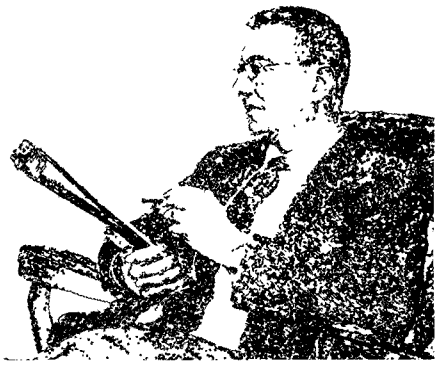
by Scott P. Richert

Strictly Business



The other day, driving through North End Commons (a neighborhood a bit north of the *Chronicles* offices and to the west of our house), I noticed a florist, a friend of mine, out in front of another flower shop, chatting with the owner. The two businesses have coexisted now for over a year, though they stand barely a block apart. I suspect that, like me, most of their customers patronize one or the other exclusively, though I doubt that there are many people who would refuse to go to the other shop if their preferred one did not have what they wanted. Each store has its own look and feel, and, outside of the standard carnations and roses, each carries a distinctive stock. Their healthy competition has helped revive commerce in a neighborhood that, for many years, has been struggling.

This is the free market at its best: Two shopkeepers, each making a living doing something he enjoys, reinvesting much of his profit in a neighborhood that he cares about, and each able to chat amiably with his competitor—who, because of his shared love for the neighborhood, is also his collaborator. Granted, there are certain conditions that make this scene between two florists more likely than a similar one between, say, two discount computer resellers or even two grocers—higher margins, stock that has to be turned over very quickly, a distribution area that is limited by the nature of the product, *etc.* Still, the scene shows that markets do not always have to tend toward the monopoly model—maximizing profits and minimizing costs by eliminating competition—so beloved of the libertarians.

Rockford, however, does have its share of monopolies, and none is more obvious and more potentially damaging than the monopoly in the newspaper business. We are a Gannett town, and the local Gannett paper, the *Rockford Register Star*, is our only daily. There are weeklies—most notably Frank Schier's *Rock River Times* and Rock Valley Publishing's *Rockford Journal*—but for day to day news, the *Register Star* is it.

Most cities of Rockford's size are one-newspaper towns, and that paper is usually owned by one of the major chains—Gannett, Knight-Ridder, Hearst, Tribune Newspapers, Newhouse. While consolidation has always been a fact of life in the newspaper business, throughout most of Rockford's history, the city usually had two, often three, and occasionally four papers vying for the public's attention. That competition was healthy, and, more importantly, it was local. Each newspaper represented the viewpoint of a segment of the community. Whose voice, however, is represented by a $6.7-billion "international company with headquarters in McLean, Va., and operations in 43 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Hong Kong"?

The largest newspaper company (by circulation) in the United States, with 101 daily newspapers, Gannett has come under fire in the past for predatory advertising practices and disregard for antitrust laws. (The U.S. Justice Department began to investigate Gannett in early 1981, but the Reagan administration had little interest in pursuing antitrust actions against media giants, and the case was quickly shelved.) In *The Chain Gang: One Newspaper Versus the Gannett Empire*, journalist Richard McCord documents many of the battles that Gannett has waged against locally owned newspapers (including here in Rockford). McCord's book, however, also makes it obvious that the problem is not Gannett per se but the evolution—or devolution—of newspaper publishing from a local concern to a centralized industry. Massive national (and, increasingly, multinational—Gannett, according to the company's website, is "the second largest regional newspaper publisher in the United Kingdom") corporations are almost structurally bound to view their "local" papers the way that Wal-Mart regards its "local" stores. "Success" and "failure" are measured in terms of monetary profit—advertising revenue even more than readers, who often are offered cut-rate subscriptions in order to boost the going rate of ads. In a limited market, advertising comes close to being a zero-sum game, which is why competition cannot be tolerated. Even if he has the best of intentions, the local publisher of a chain newspaper—who almost always was not born in the town he's stationed in and, please God and Gannett, will not die there—has little choice but to consider the impact on advertising revenue when deciding the long-term direction the paper will take.

What happens, however, when one newspaper already has a near-monopoly on advertising in its market? Part of Gannett's solution has been to lobby the Federal Communications Commission to relax restrictions on owning both a newspaper and a television station in the same market (since many businesses will advertise with both), and, under the Bush administration, they would likely have succeeded if Congress had not reined in the FCC. Another approach is to expand the newspaper's coverage into neighboring markets, increasing the pool of potential advertisers.

Under its most recent publisher, Fritz Jacobi, that seems to be the route that the *Register Star* is taking. On both its editorial and news pages, the paper constantly beats the drum of "regionalism" in the "Rock River Valley." It has consistently supported the expansive efforts of the newly renamed Rockford Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Rockford Area Council of 100, a business group of which Jacobi is also chairman of the board. To be fair, the *Register Star*'s local coverage has taken a decided turn for the better under Jacobi, and the local commitment of some reporters, such as political editor Chuck Sweeny, is unquestionable. There is only so much room for news in each issue, however, and local manufacturers have privately expressed concern that coverage of issues that affect them is poor to nonexistent. But then, manufacturers tend not to need to advertise in their hometowns. That may not be the reason for the lack of coverage, but who could blame them for thinking that it is?

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by Andrei Navrozov

The Eudaemonic Serb

The Ritz Club, the casino arm of the venerable and resplendent hotel in Piccadilly, is, for the discriminating player with an 18th-century sense of what gambling is all about, "the other place." Apart from the late John Aspinall's hallowed sepulchre in Curzon Street, this subterranean *alhambra* is the only privately owned gambling club in London. The remaining 30-odd joints—some magnificently appointed, such as the Clermont, others irreparably dingy, such as the Victoria, still others, such as the Connoisseur, possessed of that curious blend of the gleam of brushed steel with the reek of Indian kitchen spices now characterizing the modern in what remains of Britain—are owned by hotel and leisure chains, some coming from as far afield as Atlantic City.

Loyal as I am to Aspinalls, I thought it was only fair that I should give the Ritz a chance, and, when the management there smiled on me benignly, I succumbed. On my maiden evening at the club, I found myself playing side by side with a man of athletic build who was betting the floor maximum of £1,000 per number. Judging by his accent in English, and from his lively banter, over the head of the impassive croupier, with a sidekick at the next table, I identified a Serb on a rampage. How ironic that all these jolly fellows should be from the Balkans, I thought, and straightaway something in my mind seemed to sprout the gossamer wings of a metaphor.

Now, in Moscow casinos, throwing down $50,000 per spin is only *comme il faut*—a nameless fan of my gambling friend Yuri Bashmet, the violist, often comes to try his luck at the National with two million dollars—and the same may be true of the lawless expanse of local color between Split and Podgorica. Over here, this kind of behavior draws notice. Still, when the pair, £100,000 to the good, left the casino that night, nobody, least of all the expensive Hungarian blonde they had in tow, could complain that London was an unfriendly and snobbish town. The trouble was, on the two nights that followed, they took the Ritz for another £1.2 million.

Fortune, says the old Scottish proverb, laughs with one eye and weeps with the other. (For those who think it is actually Serbian, see Shakespeare's *Hamlet* I.ii.11.) The winners were given £300,000 in cash and a check for £900,000, whereupon the management stopped the check and called in Scotland Yard. A week later, a full-page article in the London *Times* announced that the pair "were alleged to have used a computerised scanner to predict the outcome of every spin of the wheel."

"The device, concealed in a mobile phone," the report continued,

> measured the speed of the ball and calculated which numbers it was most likely to rest upon. The possible existence of such a machine, which could reduce the odds of winning from 37-1 to just 6-1, has sent shock waves through the gambling world.

Now that I think of it, the Serbs *did* spend a lot of time fiddling with their mobiles. "The laser scanner measures the speed of the ball as the croupier releases it and beams the information to a microcomputer," surmised the *Times*. "The device is not able to predict the exact number on which the ball will come to rest, but instead identifies a particular group of neighbouring numbers."

Exactly a year ago, I wrote in this space that "the rational component at work in the physical apparatus of the roulette wheel is so absurdly self-evident" that, in 1966, it led a man called Ed Thorp,

> with a team of enthusiasts calling themselves the Eudaemonic Enterprises, to design a 'wearable computer' that would correctly predict the neighbors section of the wheel where the ball was likely to land on the basis of measurements of its initial speed.

So, neither the *Times* nor its "gambling world" seems to know that the trick in question is almost 40 years old. As is the trick of counting cards in games like blackjack, which had been regarded as a maniacal fantasy for some 300 years previously, until the American casinos started turning out of doors the undesirables whom their managers identified as card counters.

The visitors are not going to get their money, of course. They will be lucky to see the Danube again. The episode poses a larger question, however. If the physical component at work in roulette is as substantial—and hence open to scientific inquiry—as its mathematical counterpart in card games, are we not idiots for becoming obsessed with roulette? The question, my astute readers will appreciate, is a wholesale inversion of what passes for conventional wisdom, which holds that those who throw good money after bad at the gambling tables are idiots because the games they play are unpredictable, the house has the edge, and there is no glory in being a statistic. Indeed, it is quite obvious to me that anyone who, night after night, like so many people I know, sits in a casino playing blackjack, wastes time and money. For, unless he is a trained card counter, he is a ridiculous fool. Am I to conclude, then, that anyone who plays roulette without a microcomputer in his *Get Smart* shoephone, or a *Gilligan's Island* receiver in his eyetooth, is a ridiculous fool as well?

Not in the least. Perhaps unbeknown to the Serbian adventurer who has now set the gambling world alight, roulette is not about walking away with the loot. The adrenaline rush, in that mysterious transfiguration which is the player's nirvana, is set in motion by his being proved right, if only just once, not by his having more money in his wallet than he came with. Like the internecine strife in his native Balkans, it is about winning individual battles, not the whole war, for what military commander worth his gunpowder cares about the final outcome? *That* is something for politicians to bungle. c

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Letter From England

by Derek Turner

The End of the Affair?

◆

At 6:07 A.M. on May 29, 2003, in a BBC Radio broadcast, reporter Andrew Gilligan commented on mounting criticism of the Blair government's rationale for going to war against Iraq. Citing an anonymous "official" involved in the preparation of the Joint Intelligence Committee dossier used to justify the military campaign, Gilligan said that

> [The dossier] was transformed . . . to make it sexier. The classic example was the statement that weapons of mass destruction were ready for use in 45 minutes. That information was not in the original draft. It was included in the dossier against our wishes, because it was not reliable.

The implication was that No. 10 Downing Street had inserted false information into the dossier to justify action it had already decided to take. This throwaway comment, in one of about 19 live broadcasts Gilligan made that morning, began a bitter struggle between the BBC and the government and led to the death of one man, a special inquiry, and the resignations of Andrew Gilligan and some of the BBC's top executives.

The government already had a grudge against Gilligan because he had been a journalist for the right-wing *Sunday Telegraph* and had been the first mainstream journalist to broadcast details of the politically embarrassing proposed E.U. Charter of Fundamental Rights. The government had also been incensed by the BBC's general distaste for the Iraqi adventure. Alistair Campbell, Tony Blair's head of communications, was out for revenge and accordingly launched a bitter campaign against both Gilligan and the BBC.

For weeks, the media were full of insults and counterinsults, claims and counterclaims, as Labour battled it out with "Auntie," to find out who had said what and to whom and when. The spectacle of these organizations quarreling among themselves was pleasing for many, not least the Conservative Party. What really galvanized public interest in the affair, however, was the suicide, on July 17, of Dr. David Kelly, a weapons expert (incidentally—and curiously—a Ba'hai) who had met Gilligan and was therefore named as the source for the contentious "45 minute" claim. There were allegations that the government had deliberately leaked Kelly's name to the media and that the government was, therefore, indirectly responsible for his death.

This shocking event led to a special inquiry into the circumstances of Kelly's death, chaired by Lord Hutton, a former lord chief justice of Northern Ireland. After months of evidence-gathering and cross-examinations, including the questioning of Tony Blair, Hutton's report was published on January 28, 2004.

He concluded, first, that Kelly had committed suicide and, second, that there had been no cover-up or assassination, as some excitable conspiracy theories had even postulated. These theories had been boosted by David Kelly's e-mail to a friend a few hours before killing himself, in which he wrote that there were "many dark actors playing games," a colorful comment that led to one senior Labour official claiming that Kelly had been "a Walter Mitty character." Hutton went on to say that the BBC's 45-minute allegation was "unfounded," that the BBC's editorial control was "defective," and that there had been no government strategy to leak Kelly's name to the media. The government was exonerated, although there was muted criticism of Campbell's tone, which, Hutton felt, had stoked up tension. While Hutton was naturally accused of "whitewashing" the government (protestors dressed as judges poured white paint over the gates of Downing Street), his findings were hardly surprising, bearing in mind the strictly limited nature of Hutton's remit. As there had clearly been no government strategy to leak Kelly's name, it was naturally difficult to prove that it had.

The Tories (who, like Republicans in America, always place undue emphasis on the perceived procedural or personal-conduct errors of their opponents) were not the only ones who were surprised by the findings. The BBC's two top officials, Chairman of the Board of Governors Gavyn Davies and Director-General Greg Dyke, resigned, on January 28 and 29, respectively—followed, on the 30th, by Andrew Gilligan. Even Dyke's and Davies' close personal connections with Labour—both were Labour supporters and donors, and Davies is married to Sue Nye, who runs Gordon Brown's private office—could not save them.

There ensued panicky and slightly ludicrous reactions from many on the left who had hoped that members of the Blair government—whom they regard as Thatcherite sell-outs—would be found guilty. A good example was the press release from the National Union of Journalists, which said that the verdict was "a threat to independent journalism"—a bit rich, coming from a union that forbids its members to hold perceived "racist" views and which campaigns actively against legal political parties of which its leadership disapproves. Many BBC staffers clubbed together and cofunded a lachrymose newspaper advertisement: "Greg Dyke stood for brave, independent and rigorous BBC journalism that was fearless in its search for the truth."

In other quarters, however, the verdict was welcomed, even by many Tories, who have long disliked the BBC for its spaniel-like devotion to politically correct thinking and have accused it of anti-Tory bias. For many on the right, the BBC/Labour rift was a case of thieves falling out.

BBC bias against the Conservatives comes in two forms. There is a built-in, self-preservative bias, because the Conservatives have, for years, talked about scrapping the compulsory TV license fee, which would effectively end the BBC in its current form. One shadow over BBC/Labour relations in recent years has been the increasing popularity of this argument within New Labour circles.

Less easily explicable is the generic anti-right-wing, antipatriotic, "antiracist," "antisexist," and "antihomophobic" tone of many (not all) BBC programs. Yet this may not be so much a conscious ideological bias as a reflection of the wider cultural ambience. This ambience may be partly shaped by the BBC, but it also partly shapes the BBC. True objectivity is a very rare commodity at any time, and even those who view themselves as "open-minded" are the products of the moral and political climate of their times.

While I would hope that the BBC would

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strive to rise above conventional "wisdom" and analyze every issue from every possible perspective, perhaps they cannot be entirely blamed for often being unequal to the task. Few people have the time or the intellectual energy to examine taboos and dissect popular assumptions, and rushed journalists have even less time and energy. It is no wonder that they often fall into triteness and politically correct cliché. While we should not excuse the BBC from often failing to live up to its responsibilities, we must not fall into the trap of presuming that all BBC reporters are *conscious* leftists.

Another point to consider is that the Middle English lack of interest in abstractions and the arts (which can sometimes amount to philistinism) has caused and perpetuated the decades-long dominance of the arts and media by leftists. Young people with leftist sympathies often gravitate toward careers in the arts or the media, while visceral Tories often gravitate instinctively toward more exciting or lucrative, but less influential, careers in the armed forces or as merchant bankers. This built-in leftist starting point means that the leftist dominance of the broadcast media is self-reinforcing, with job vacancies being advertised internally, in trade journals or in the *Guardian*'s extensive media section.

While many BBC journalists are open leftists (such as political editor Andrew Marr, who believes that "repression . . . can be a powerful force for good" when it comes to "racism"), others, such as foreign-affairs editor John Simpson, are Tory supporters, although there are admittedly fewer of them.

Nor should we assume that, if the BBC's license fee were privatized, high-quality television and radio would automatically ensue. The examples of the private TV and radio channels are not exactly heartening. Decaying cultures mean poor programming, almost irrespective of the organizational and financial arrangements of those who produce the programs.

Nevertheless, few could regret the disappearance of Greg Dyke, whose combination of breezy vulgarity and egregious political correctness made many squirm in vicarious embarrassment. Dyke's two chief contributions to the BBC were his famous 2001 remark that the Beeb was "hideously white" and his gimmick of issuing employees red and yellow cards (similar to the penalty cards used by English football referees) emblazoned with messages like "Cut the Crap," which employees were supposed to wave at meetings if they disapproved of the way in which the meeting was being conducted. John Reith, the illustrious first director-general of the BBC, whose ideal of a paternalistic, uplifting broadcasting service persisted within the corporation until recent times, would have winced. (Reith was forced out in 1938 after his "self-righteous, unshakeable views became out of date"—as the BBC website oh-so-objectively expresses it.)

This affair gives the Conservatives a chance, perhaps, to forge more cordial contacts within the BBC. They appear to have taken this hint, because they distanced themselves hurriedly from the unfortunately timed publication of a Tory-commissioned report on broadcasting, *Beyond the Charter*, which recommended, *inter alia*, that the license fee be abolished. Yet they have a lot of ground to make up, and the government will not dare to alienate the BBC entirely, because it knows what a hold the corporation has on the British public's affections.

The present Royal Charter (the BBC's role, rights, responsibilities, and structure are set out in a series of ten-year Royal Charters) runs out in 2006. The review process might recommend abolition of the license fee—which the BBC seems to believe is now inevitable, judging from its efforts to launch ancillary digital and special-interest channels and programs. The government will no doubt make honeyed threats to ensure that the BBC will be on its best behavior in order to avoid losing its subsidy. Chances are that, among these pressures, the probable desire of the new BBC heads to avoid rocking the boat, and the Conservatives' newfound desire to be chummy with the corporation, the license fee will stay in place—an anomaly in an otherwise privatized Britain and a license for the Beeb to resume normal ideological service.

Yet this slight to the BBC will not be quickly forgotten, and some in the Beeb are no doubt already plotting revenge or seeking to assert their own independence by giving Labour a harder time in the future. The tacit alliance between two of the chief institutions of the British left has been damaged, maybe irreparably. Whatever happens, Hutton has raised a barrier of distrust between two formerly complementary agencies of dissolution, and for that we should be thankful.

Derek Turner is the editor of Right Now!, *published in London.*

Letter From Australia

by R.J. Stove

A Tale of Two Queenslanders

◆

Peter Hollingworth was born in 1935. After completing his national service, he joined the Anglican ministry, serving both at the parish level and in philanthropic roles. He spent a quarter of a century helping to run a leading Australian charity, Melbourne's Brotherhood of Saint Laurence. Appointed Anglican archbishop of Brisbane in 1989, he was named Australian of the Year in 1992. Prime Minister John Howard appointed Hollingworth Australia's 42nd governor-general in 2001 (upon the retirement of Sir William Deane, whose incurable unctuous leftism earned him the widespread nickname "Shadow Minister for Social Security").

Bill D'Arcy, born in 1939, upheld ethics somewhat different from Hollingworth's. He worked from the early 1960's as a teacher, in which function he distinguished himself by an innate inability to let schoolgirls alone. With one student, he proceeded somewhat cautiously, confining himself to undoing her bra, fondling her, and vowing to thrash her if she complained. At least three other girls found him more overtly violent. One unforgettable day, he carried sex education to its logical conclusion by raping a pupil in front of her classmates, *pour encourager les autres*. It took almost three decades for this background, which ultimately resulted in 18 indecency charges, to damage D'Arcy's political career. From 1972 to 1974, and again from 1977 to 2000, he represented a Labor electorate in Queensland's legislature; during the 1980's, he served as Labor's deputy leader (its leader at the time being, piquantly enough, fellow convicted rapist Keith Wright). He rendered heroic service to Peter Beattie—the former Wright campaign manager who has been Queensland's Labor premier since 1998—by helping to preserve Beattie's first administration, which lacked a parliamentary majority. This task turned out to be no sinecure. On 143 occasions (according to Hansard's report of May 29, 2003), Beattie happily accepted D'Arcy's vote to stay in office. In 2000, the Brisbane District Court sentenced D'Arcy to 14 years in jail, a term that was

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subsequently reduced on the grounds of the criminal's alleged ill health—to 10 years.

So which V.I.P. has inspired *Der-Stürmer*-esque baying for his blood? D'Arcy? Guess again, comrade.

Worse, as early as 1997, Beattie—not yet premier—had been warned by Labor colleague Lorraine Bird that at least one sex criminal (whom she did not name) inhabited the Queensland party's inner circle. Mrs. Bird described, *via* the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's radio network on May 21, 2003, Beattie's response to the warning: open laughter, accompanied by the words "Righty-oh, okay." During 1997, Pauline Hanson and her One Nation Party were approaching the apex of their political fame. Thus, Mrs. Bird feared the electoral consequences of an anti-Labor backlash over D'Arcy's corruption. She did well to fear: A One Nation candidate defeated her at the cliff-hanger 1998 state election (the one that gave Beattie the premiership), after which D'Arcy's vice became publicly known. It still took another two years to persuade D'Arcy to leave parliament, and, even then, he quit only after extracting from Beattie the promise—duly kept—of $600,000 Australian in severance pay. Melbourne's *News Weekly* mentioned this scandal on June 14, 2003; the mainstream Queensland press completely ignored it.

Meanwhile, the moral sense that so conspicuously deserted Beattie in the matter of D'Arcy has been—if we are to believe Beattie himself—working overtime in the matter of Hollingworth. It emerged in 2002 that Hollingworth, in his archiepiscopal role, had allowed a pedophile clergyman to continue working within Brisbane parishes. Although neither during the 1990's nor later did anyone formally accuse Hollingworth of willfully suppressing knowledge of the clergyman's habits, this little fact failed to slake the lynching bee's bloodlust. For weeks, especially before the Iraq war, broadsheets as well as tabloids had the greatest difficulty in devoting even part of their front pages to non-Hollingworth-related Australian news. Hollingworth, however, refused to obey the clamor for his resignation. Over a few precious days, it actually looked as if Rupert Murdoch and his fellow *sansculottes* (who, since 2001, had openly wanted to chase Hollingworth out of the governor-general's post, justifying their rage by pious "separation of Church and state" humbug) could still be cheated of their victim.

No such luck. As soon as Hollingworth looked likely to escape, Federal Labor parliamentarian Lindsay Tanner came to Beattie's aid and swung into action. Under the quaintly styled institution of "parliamentary privilege," he cited accusations of Hollingworth having raped a woman named Annie Jarmyn at a youth camp in Bendigo, Victoria, 40 years before. Miss Jarmyn—with whose long-standing and very public history of mental illness Baron Munchausen would have sympathized—had killed herself on April 22. Other than her say-so, not a skerrick of evidence against Hollingworth existed, as Hollingworth himself complained with understandable bluntness on May 7:

> I did not rape her, I did not sexually assault her. I deny absolutely that I have ever raped or in any way sexually assaulted any person. Not only did I not hold any of the positions alleged by the woman in question, I did not know her. I never attended any meeting at St John's church in North Bendigo. I never organized a youth camp for the diocese of Bendigo. I never attended a youth camp organized by that diocese.

In the end, Hollingworth's career ended not through the lunatic rape charge, nor because of the original Anglican report that taxed him with pastoral negligence in employing a pedophile. Nor was Hollingworth forced out by the rather ill-advised public comments of Sydney's Catholic archbishop, George Cardinal Pell, who has come perilously close to implying that because he himself needed to endure totally fraudulent charges of sexual misconduct, all other Christian leaders must similarly be prepared to do so. (Convinced that Australia's presence in Iraq satisfied "just war" criteria that eluded John Paul II, Cardinal Pell assured a *Catholic News* interviewer on May 27: "I think even in a just war, it's not appropriate, for example, for an archbishop to be farewelling our troops. The separation of church and state in Australia is a blessing and we should preserve it."

No, what destroyed Hollingworth was his incautious televised description of the girl molested by the convicted Anglican clergyman as a "Lolita." That one trisyllable—whether justified or not in the particular circumstances that Hollingworth had in mind—consigned its speaker to the same perdition as Samuel Francis, Trent Lott, Congressman James Moran, and every other public figure in modern America who has failed to comprehend post-Christian discourse's unwritten law: Always apologize, always explain. And when you have finished apologizing and explaining, apologize and explain yet again. (After all, look how brilliantly successful this groveling proved for *Darkness at Noon*'s Rubashov.)

Vae victis. John Howard first announced that he would stand by Hollingworth and then switched to "we-don't-want-to-lose-you-but-we-think-you-ought-to-go" mode. (The regular contrast between Howard's heroics against straw men and his obeisance to *real* threats—most famously, of course, to the antigun brigade, but, more recently, to the stem-cell Strangeloves—evokes words once apocryphally ascribed to former Victorian premier Sir Henry Bolte: "I do not bow to mob hatred . . . only to mob applause.") At least the prime minister chose on June 22 an above-average successor for the governor-general's post: Major-General Michael Jeffery, who, while governor of Western Australia during the 1990's, expressed himself with rare frankness on the theme of Aboriginal welfarism. So something may yet be saved of the vice-regal wreckage after all, even though that something does not include Hollingworth and even though the Fourth Estate's troglodytes imagined they were paying Jeffery some kind of compliment when they unanimously hailed him as "a man of the people." (The religious bimonthly *Annals Australasia* reported in June 2003, that, at the outcry's height, and with a softheartedness entirely typical of him, Hollingworth paid spindoctor Andrew Reynolds $750 Australian per day for public-relations "services" rendered.) Yet any Australian monarchist who imagines after Hollingworth's downfall—as, alas, Australian monarchists still do by the thousands, if not indeed by the tens of thousands—that the 1999 constitutional referendum's antirepublican outcome provided a serious obstacle to Australian Jacobinism really should go on the waiting lists for a brain transplant.

R.J. Stove writes from Melbourne.

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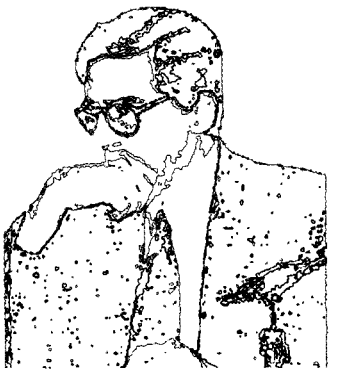
by Srdja Trifkovic

Failing America



The Soviet Communist Party used to devote a lot of attention to the problem of inefficient agriculture. The party's Agrarian Policy Commission debated endlessly, throughout the final quarter-century of the Soviet state's existence, how to improve the system. Should the state farm (*sovkhoz*) be made self-financing? Should the collective farm (*kolkhoz*) have its own heavy equipment, or should it depend on state-operated tractor stations? How to reconcile the principles of the command economy, with its procurement quotas and state-fixed prices, with the need to motivate peasants to produce more? What should be the maximum area of the private plot on which farmers can produce food for their own use and to supplement their incomes: a quarter-hectare or a half-hectare?

The notion that both state and collective farms should be abolished, the price of produce determined by the market, and the land given back to peasants whose holdings should be limited only by their ability to work the land never entered the discussion. To make such a suggestion would have marked the end of an apparatchik's political career and exposed him to all manner of unpleasantness. The solution to the problem of collectivized agriculture lay outside the ideological parameters of the decision-making community.

This spring, the proceedings of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States had the same Soviet quality. The bipartisan ten-member commission was supposed to investigate the circumstances surrounding the failure of America's intelligence agencies to predict and stop the September 11 attacks and to recommend solutions to any systemic failures it identified. In the course of its proceedings, the commission asked all kinds of "hard" and "probing" questions designed to determine if the Bush administration could have done more to prevent the attacks and what threat assessments, procedures, and policies it inherited from Bill Clinton. The televised hearings included testimony from Colin Powell and his predecessor, Madeleine Albright; Donald Rumsfeld and his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz; Condoleezza Rice and John Ashcroft; Clinton defense secretary William Cohen and national security advisor Samuel Berger; and former White House counterterrorism expert Richard Clarke, who, two days before his testimony, published a book taking Bush to task for his administration's alleged failure to deal adequately with the terrorist threat.

Like good Politburo members, the witnesses indulged in a blame game of the *sovkhoz versus kolkhoz* kind. They never touched on the fundamentals of policy or history that would help them understand the problem of terrorism and, thus, enable them to make recommendations on how to prevent tragedies in the future. Three primary and two secondary areas of great concern remained unexplored. The primary ones are this country's immigration policy, the nature of Islam, and the strategy of global dominance. The secondary ones concern the shortcomings and terrorism-related nuances of American policies in the Middle East and in the Balkans.

Testifying before the commission, the widow of a September 11 victim criticized the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS, now the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, USCIS), for granting visas to 15 of the 19 hijackers who were "single, idle young adults with no specific destination in the United States"—"classic overstay candidates" whose visa application forms, moreover, were incomplete and incorrect. Other witnesses criticized the lack of coordination between the INS and other agencies and suggested procedural improvements. Their focus was invariably on the "failures" of the system to function properly, not on the possible flaws in its ideological tenets.

The existence of a large Muslim diaspora in the United States and elsewhere in the West was treated as a given. Testimony specifically addressing this issue came from Dr. Abou El Fadl, a devout Muslim and UCLA professor described as "one of the leading authorities in Islamic law in the United States." El Fadl asserted that, "as with all of the immigrant groups, many American Muslims bring with them dreams of liberty and justice," and he insisted that the "War on Terror" demanded "actively resisting and guarding against the alienation of any part of our citizenry." The underlying multiculturalist assumptions of the immigration policy that had allowed the establishment and growth of this particular segment of "our citizenry" were not scrutinized.

The existence of the multimillion-strong Muslim diaspora in the United States and elsewhere in the West provides terrorists with the recruits, the infrastructure, and the relative invisibility without which they would not be able to operate. A substantial segment of this immigrant group shares key objectives with the terrorists, even if it does not approve of all their methods. A sizeable minority of Muslims in the United States wishes to transform this country into a caliphate and to replace the Constitution with *sharia*. A coherent long-term counterterrorist strategy, therefore, must deny Islam a foothold in the West. Like the idea of the free market to a Soviet party hack, however, the use of cultural and religious criteria in determining the eligibility of prospective immigrants is ideologically unacceptable to the ruling American establishment.

Closely related was the commission's failure to address the phenomenon of Islam and, in particular, to examine Islam's impact on its adherents as a political ideology and a program of action. The notion that terrorism is an aberration of Mohammedanism and not a predictable consequence of the ideology of *jihad* is a firmly rooted bipartisan consensus. The commission's behavior again appeared ideological and dogmatic. Were it not so, former President Clinton would have been asked to explain his statement to the U.N. General Assembly, made almost exactly three years before September 11, that "there is no inherent clash between Islam and America." Were it

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not so, President George W. Bush would have been asked to explain his often repeated assertion that Islam is a "religion of peace," that "we know [*sic*] that Islam is fully compatible with liberty and tolerance and progress," and that "terrorists who claim Islam as their inspiration defile one of the world's great faiths."

There are two possibilities here: Either Presidents Clinton and Bush knew the truth about Islam but pretended otherwise for political reasons, and the commission quietly understood their need for diplomatic prudence and made the pragmatic decision not to dwell on the issue; or they meant what they said, and the commission regarded their statements as unremarkable and therefore unworthy of scrutiny.

The former could have been the case in another era, when Western decision-making elites shared an instinctive understanding of who they were and what they were defending. Had they striven to draw the distinction between the "moderate, mainstream" communists and the "extreme" subversive fringe in the 1950's, the Cold War would have been lost. Such a robust sense of self no longer applies in the bipartisan multiculturalist paradigm, and, for that reason, neither the present administration nor its recent predecessors could develop a coherent conceptual image of the adversary without which there can be no viable antiterrorist strategy. Clinton's hope to co-opt Islam into a consumerist postnational global village is indistinguishable from Bush's hope to domesticate Islam under the aegis of a nondenominational deism. Both attempts have failed, but this failure has not been admitted by the commission.

The third key problem that remained unexamined concerned the link between terrorism and the commitment of the United States to the unrestrained projection of her power everywhere in the world. That commitment, asserted in Bill Clinton's 1999 war in Kosovo, was made official in the Bush administration's National Security Strategy unveiled in September 2002. In a forum supposedly devoted to "grilling" the respondents, it was at least worth asking Mr. Rumsfeld's or Dr. Wolfowitz's opinion whether the terrorist threat to America is in any way related to the policy of global hegemony implicit in that strategy, which is largely their brainchild. On this important issue, however, the commission was blinkered by the ideology of American exceptionalism—an eminently bipartisan delusion, having a Clintonian form in "humanitarian interventionism" and a neoconservative form in global hegemonism. Having internalized such assumptions, the commission was as likely to offer useful insights on the War on Terror as Ptolemaic astronomy was to explain the motions of planetary bodies.

Concerning secondary issues of specific policies, Israel was strangely absent from the commission's deliberations. Different aspects of U.S. policy in the Middle East were mentioned in various testimony, but nobody asked the one question that is the mother of all others: Is our "special relationship" with Israel in any way connected to the terrorist threat? The bipartisan assumption was unstated but clear: The United States should continue to provide open-ended and nearly-unconditional support to Israel because our unsinkable aircraft carrier is at war with the same terrorists as we are.

This may be true, but an open-minded commission should not assume that it is so. It should look, without prejudice, into the possibility that a different, less-passionate relationship would be beneficial to a long-term antiterrorist strategy, by reducing the perception of a permanent American bias in Middle Eastern affairs that breeds rage which fuels terrorism. The commission, however, did not explore any ways to stop alienating over one billion Muslims.

Less significant, but equally noteworthy, is that the entire Clinton team was allowed to go through hours of testimony without a single question about the assumptions and objectives of the administration's policy in the Balkans between 1993 and 2001. Single-minded support for Bosnian and Albanian Muslims turned the Balkans from a protectorate of the New World Order into an Islamic threat to Western interests. Clinton's intervention resulted in the strengthening of an already aggressive Islamic base in the heart of Europe, which is now all but permanent. He was still in the White House back in 2000 when a highly classified State Department report—released in the aftermath of September 11—warned that the Muslim-controlled areas of Bosnia had become a safe haven for Islamic terrorists who threaten Europe and the United States and who were protected by the Muslim government in Sarajevo. Not a single major terrorist outrage of recent years, including the recent bombing in Madrid, was devoid of a Bosnian connection.

The culpability is not only Clinton's: The problem of collusion between U.S. administrations and Islamic radicals harks back to the support Bin Laden and other fundamentalist Muslims received from Washington following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Admittedly, at the height of the Cold War, Carter's and Reagan's advisors could argue that "blowback" was a risk worth taking. A quarter of a century later, however, it is essential to spell out and to rectify more recent blunders of a similar nature. If the War on Terror is to have any meaning at all, the September 11 commission should have investigated the evidence that, throughout the 1990's, the U.S. government aided and abetted Al Qaeda in the Balkans, long after it was recognized as a major security threat to the United States. That this did not happen is largely the result of administrations of both parties having provided effective support for Islamic ambitions in pursuit of short-term political or military objectives.

The establishment of a national commission to investigate terrorist attacks on the United States was a good idea. It could have been the forum for thinking the unthinkable and making America safer in the process. The decision to appoint to its panel ten political insiders who belong to different parties but share the culture, values, and prejudices of the prospective witnesses reflected the determination of the duopoly to prevent any such boldness. The commission has succeeded in avoiding key issues and, thus, has failed America. Its report has not yet been issued, but its tone can be predicted. It will apportion blame for the details; there will be a lot of partisan haggling and horse-trading in the course of its drafting; the Democrats may even issue a minority report blaming Bush. As for discussion of the real questions and meaningful survival strategies, there will be none. In the aftermath of the worst terrorist outrage in U.S. history, a bipartisan Washington learned nothing and forgot nothing. c

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THE MEDIA

Whose Bias?

by Leon T. Hadar

Two years ago, I was invited to address a group of Jewish-American women on the question, "Is the American media coverage of Middle East biased?" The event took place during the height of the second Palestinian *intifada*, and my hosts were accusing the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, as well as some of the leading television news networks, of covering the rising violence in the Holy Land in a way that was biased against the Jewish state.

The local newspaper carried a front-page photo of Israeli soldiers beating up a few Palestinians kids in Nablus? Well, didn't I hear somewhere that the editor's mother was, well, Arab, Muslim, or something like that? And that the reporter covering the Middle East was raised in Germany, which kind of brings up the question of what his dad was doing during World War II (and don't give that crap about the Eastern Front). And did you notice how that television anchorman raises his eyebrows every time he refers to a statement made by Israeli officials? And why do they always showing the bad side of Ariel Sharon's profile? Don't they have some clips from before he put on all that weight? Why don't they broadcast them? Is it because that television broadcaster was once married to a Palestinian?

I am not making this up. Ask the editor of your local newspaper to let you read the letters he receives each week accusing his paper of being "anti-Israeli." You would have to conclude that the American press is controlled by a pro-Arab cabal. In fact, for years, I have been hearing rumors from members of the "pro-Israeli community" that ABC anchorman Peter Jennings is, or was, married to a Palestinian woman or had a Palestinian lover. (He is actually happily married to journalist Kati Marton, who happens to be a daughter of Hungarian refugees.) Jennings' crime has been his somewhat balanced coverage of the Middle East and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which earned his network the reputation among Jewish-American critics of being the "Arab Broadcasting Company."

The women I was addressing told me that some of their Jewish friends had decided to cancel their subscriptions to the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* in order to punish them for their supposedly hostile attitudes toward Israel. Someone referred to a photo of a Palestinian flag that the *Times* had carried a few days earlier (not mentioning the number of times the newspaper had published photos of Israeli flags), while another speaker referred to the "antisemitic" *Post* (which has been run by a Jewish-owned company) and announced that she was switching to the more pro-Israeli *Washington Times* (owned by that great friend of the Jewish people, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon). And, since the *New York Times*' publishers and many of its top reporters and columnists are Jewish, pro-Israeli critics tend to portray them as "self-hating Jews."

I decided to conduct my own experiment in media analysis and circulated among the audience copies of several articles on Israel and the Middle East. All were very critical of Israeli policies in the West Bank and Gaza and, in particular, of Prime Minister Sharon and his Likud government. One of the writers provided a very depressing exposé of the humiliating fashion in which Palestinian civilians are treated by the Israeli military. Another columnist bashed the Jewish settlers in the West Bank, describing them as religious fanatics and even referring to them as "fascist." One editorial even called on the Bush administration to pressure the Israeli government to end the building of new settlements. It all sounded very, very anti-Israeli to my hosts' ears.

I asked my audience to guess where those items were published. In the end, they were divided. Most guessed that the articles appeared in Palestinian newspapers. Others speculated that the authors probably had ties to Nazi publications. A few considered the possibility that the pieces were published in European newspapers. (*Le Monde*? *Der Spiegel*? The *Guardian*? That's the kind of writing you would expect from those French, the Germans, and the loony left in Britain, right?)

The articles, however, were all published in the leading Israeli Hebrew-language daily, *Ha'aretz*, also known as "the *New York Times* of Israel." *Ha'aretz* is read by government officials, business executives, and the professional and intellectual elites in Israel. In addition to its exceptional coverage of current events, which has garnered the newspaper many national and international awards, *Ha'aretz* carries editorials and commentaries that help set the public agenda in Israel. It is a "must read" among diplomats and foreign correspondents stationed in Israel, who receive a more accurate and balanced picture of what is happening there than the one presented by most leading American newspapers. *Ha'aretz*—unlike the *Times* or the *Post*—even employs a full-time correspondent who is stationed in the West Bank and Gaza and who provides the Palestinian perspective on the conflict, which explains why the articles by correspondent Amira Hess were considered so "pro-Arab" by my hosts.

Even more controversial, from the Jewish-American perspective, is the wide range of opinions among Israeli writers in the newspaper. For example, an article by secular intellectual Uzi Ornan accused Israel of practicing apartheid policies against her non-Jewish citizens and demanded that Israel take steps to separate religion from the state, an idea that is very popular among young Israelis as well as immigrants from Russia, among whom there are a large number of mixed Jewish-Christian marriages. (According to some estimates, about one third of those immigrants are not considered Jewish based on Orthodox Jewish religious rules that are legally binding in Israel.) Meron Benvenisti, a leading non-Zionist writer, has been calling for changing Israel's identity as a Jewish state and for the creation of a non-Jewish state in the area between Jordan and the Mediterranean. And just a few weeks ago, *Ha'aretz* carried a long interview with a renowned Israeli intellectual, Benny Morris, endorsing the idea of forcing Palestinians to emigrate from Israel under certain conditions.

Much of the political debate that is taking place in Israel has not been reflected in the coverage in the *Times*, the *Post*, or other important media outlets, where editors and writers have neither the will nor the resources and time to battle the groups decrying their "anti-Israeli" coverage. Indeed, as part of the effort to impose the Israeli p.c. line, a network of

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organizations controlled by Likud supporters such as CAMERA (the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America), COMA (the Committee on Media Accountability), and FLAME (Facts and Logic About the Middle East) has been formed in recent years specifically to combat "anti-Israeli bias" in the American press. These and other groups inundate American news organizations with letters to the editor demanding "balanced" coverage and threatening boycotts of "hostile" media organizations and writers. Recently, when New York University professor Tony Judt proposed in the *New York Review of Books* a "one state" solution to the Israel/Palestine conflict that was not very different in its outlines from the one Benvenisti had discussed in *Ha'aretz*, he was branded as an enemy of the Jewish people by neoconservative writers, and the magazine received hundreds of angry letters from readers canceling their subscriptions. (The only sympathetic letter to the editor came from Amos Elon, a columnist for *Ha'aretz*.)

For many American Jewish and non-Jewish supporters of Israel, the problem is not really the existence of an "anti-Israeli" press in the United States. Comparing the daily coverage of the Middle East by leading European newspapers with that of the American press (say, the *Independent versus* the *New York Times*), it becomes quite obvious that American media outlets have been less inclined to focus on Israeli mistreatment of the Palestinians than their European counterparts have been—or, for that matter, than *Ha'aretz* and the rest of the Israeli press have been. Indeed, for many of the critics of the "anti-Israeli" press in the United States, it has all been a classic case of "killing the messenger." As part of an effort to preserve a fantasy about how they want the Jewish state to be, they reject, discredit, or refuse to deal with depictions of an Israel whose policies contradict their own cherished political values.

Social scientists call the condition that results from perceiving discrepancies between the image and the reality of an admired figure "cognitive dissonance." When a beloved political leader is accused of immoral personal behavior or political corruption, the immediate tendency of his admirer is not to withdraw his support but to question the reliability of the news medium or of the journalists who reported the story or the credibility of the report's source. He may even avoid reading or listening to any information that suggests the idol is less than perfect.

There are, of course, limits to such exercises in avoiding reality, as when, for example, the crimes of the leader become so obvious that they lead to his resignation. These developments can be very traumatic for the true believer, which explains why some supporters of the Communist Party in the West suffered mental breakdowns or committed suicide after the extent of Stalin's horrors became obvious in the early 1950's.

Israel has had the potential to produce serious cognitive dissonance in its supporters in this country. Members of the Jewish community in America have been in the forefront of such liberal causes as the struggle for civil and human rights, the separation of Church and state, and free immigration to the United States. They would have been the first to protest any move to impose Christianity as a state religion in America, to pass a "law of return" limiting immigration to white Christians, or to force citizens to carry identity cards indicating their religion or ethnic origin. Those same American Jews, however, support a state that applies these and other discriminatory policies in its treatment of Christian and Muslim Arab citizens. Similarly, many of the American Jews who led the fight against American intervention in Vietnam ignore or defend the long and bloody Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

How have most supporters of Israel in the United States avoided dealing with their own political inconsistencies? The answer lies in their image-maintenance methods designed to avoid the cognitive dissonance between their perceptions of Israel and its reality. That and an American media that, for many years, sympathized with the Israeli point of view have helped them to preserve the Israeli fantasy for a while. Until the 1967 Middle East war, memories of the European holocaust and an Israeli political elite steeped in the effective use of public relations produced "Exodus"-like images of the Jewish state in this country. Discrimination against the Arab population, the theocratic nature of the Israeli political system, and adventurist and militaristic Israeli policies received little attention from the American press, though they were the subject of lively public debate in Israel. As a result, American Jews did not have to reconcile their liberal personal agendas with the realization that Israel was not a progressive paradise in the Middle East. Contradictory facts were not permitted to interfere with an idealized view of the Jewish state.

Developments since the 1967 war, however, and especially the policies pursued by the nationalistic and messianic leadership that came to power in 1977, posed major psychological problems for many supporters of Israel. Television-news images and print-media reports confronted them with the realities of Israeli suppression of Palestinian aspirations for self-determination and the increasing power of the Orthodox Israeli political parties. The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the two Palestinian uprisings have aggravated the tensions between the liberal instincts of Israel's Jewish-American supporters and their backing for an Israeli government pursuing nationalist and expansionist policies. Even the most ardent supporters of the Jewish state were shocked by the bloody scenes from the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, a direct outcome of Likud policies.

Questioning the credibility of news reports from the Middle East has been one of the major tools of American Jews trying to cope with the continuing cognitive dissonance. I am amazed sometimes that, even in this age of the internet, with *Ha'aretz* and other Israeli newspapers maintaining English-language websites and cable news networks broadcasting around the clock, for many American Jews (and for many Christian evangelicals), Israel still remains a fantasy—and they would like to keep it that way.

Leon T. Hadar is the former New York correspondent for the Jerusalem Post *and the author of* Quagmire: America in the Middle East.

INTELLIGENCE

Who Was Watching the Watchers?

by Margie Burns

One cannot reasonably assume that the attacks of September 11, 2001, were a seamless conspiracy. Even a successful plot is not a well-oiled machine, and, whatever the plotting behind the scenes, as Shakespeareans say about *Romeo and Juliet*, the skyjackings of September 11 were, in some ways, tragedy snatched from the jaws of comedy.

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Take, for example, the suspects' numerous plane and road trips before they convened aboard the vessels they used for their attacks. Alleged ringleader Muhammad Atta and Abdulaziz Al-Omari arrived at Boston's Logan International Airport, where two of the jumbo jets were hijacked, on a flight from Portland, Maine, the morning of September 11. For reasons unknown, Atta had driven from Boston to Portland the previous afternoon, before flying back, cutting his connection so close that his baggage missed the flight.

The skyjackers had already shuttled between Florida and Baltimore, California and Baltimore, Maryland and Florida, New Jersey and Maryland, Florida and New Jersey, *etc.*, within the previous 18 days. Why? As any old OSS hand would anticipate, their moving around made them visible.

Every move, every stop, increased their chances of being seen or accosted. According to the FBI, during their one evening in Portland, Atta and Al-Omari registered at a Comfort Inn; were seen at a Pizza Hut, a gas station, and a Wal-Mart; and were photographed by surveillance cameras at a restaurant and at least one ATM. Their Massachusetts rental car was also caught on camera, including its license plate. They checked out of the Comfort Inn about 5:30 the next morning and, within 30 minutes, were aboard a Colgan Air flight back to Boston, after being filmed again going through airport security in Portland. Short of waving their arms and yelling, "Here we are," they could hardly have presented more opportunities for vigilance. The hijackers did, however, manage to bypass security and avoid being photographed at Dulles.

What was the point of all this last-minute skipping around? If it makes any sense, it gave their watchers time and opportunity to note problems, to wave a hand frantically (so to speak), and to call the whole thing off.

In addition, it is worth considering the many international and domestic trips that the skyjackers took before summer 2001, particularly the numerous trips they took from May to August 2001, a period described by investigators as a "spike" in "chatter" and a rising "threat level" for those monitoring terrorism.

At least five of the September 11 suspects visited Las Vegas several times between May and August 2001. At least one suspect from each of the four hijacked planes stayed in Las Vegas. Suspected ringleader Muhammad Atta checked in to a Vegas hotel on June 29, checked out on July 1, and returned on August 13. Marwan Al-Shehhi, Hani Hanjour, Nawaf Al-Hazmi, and Ziad Jarrah all traveled there at least once. Altogether, the hijackers made at least six trips to Vegas.

Yet, a few days after September 11, 31 passengers were allowed to fly out of Las Vegas, including one named Al-Hazmi. Four manifests from these flights have been released by Craig Unger, author of the best-seller *House of Bush, House of Saud*.

A September 13 flight from Lexington, Kentucky, to London carried 15 passengers, including 8 Saudis; a flight from Las Vegas to Switzerland the next day carried 7 Saudis; a "VIP flight" from New York to Paris on September 22 carried 12 passengers, including 4 Saudis; and another Las Vegas-to-Paris VIP flight on September 24 carried 24 passengers, including 11 Saudis. Some who jetted away would have been "persons of interest" in any traditional investigation, and others had round-the-clock knowledge of them.

If Saudi royals and other Muslims feared reprisals and were allowed to leave for their personal safety, how could that rationale have applied to British citizens Jack Rusbridge and Anthony John Stafford, on the flight out of Lexington, or to U.S. citizen Dean Earl Knect, on the Vegas-Paris flight? Assuming that diplomatic immunity covers the 20,000-member Saud family, does it also cover Saud family employees of other nationalities, including British and American? Why was a CEO of a Middle Eastern bank flown out, given the importance of the "money trail" in investigating terrorism? If allowing the Saudis' servants out of the country was an humanitarian gesture, why was an award-winning Egyptian physicist also aboard? Some family members of September 11 victims, through the Family Steering Committee, have also asked why Saudi royals and others were permitted to fly in commercial airspace, when victims' relatives were not given that permission.

What were the Saudi royals and the others doing in Las Vegas? When did they go to Las Vegas, and how long were they there? Given that any extra movement increased their chances of getting caught, what reason could the hijackers have had for trips to Vegas in the first place other than to rendezvous with authorities? Is it likely that five skyjackers, including the devout Atta, went to Vegas, separately and together at different times, only to fit in a little gambling?

Back to the morning of September 11: Having boarded their planes, the skyjackers faced flight delays on each aircraft. American Airlines Flight 11 took off 14 minutes late (7:59 A.M.); United Flight 175 took off 16 minutes late (8:14); American Airlines Flight 77 left Dulles 10 minutes late (8:20); and United Flight 93 left Newark 41 minutes late (8:42). Junctures for intervention continued to open up. Two flight attendants on Flight 11, Betty Ong and Amy Sweeney, independently phoned American Airlines (8:21) and said that the plane was being hijacked. Heroically, they continued to narrate the situation by phone for 25 minutes, until the plane crashed. From 8:24 to 8:38, pilot John Ogonowski periodically activated cockpit speakers, allowing Boston flight controllers to hear the hijacking. In fact, there was so much unscripted telephoning that passengers on Flight 93 deduced what was taking place and successfully downed their plane, directly or indirectly, before it reached its target.

Unfortunately, there were puzzling delays in notifying the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and flight-control centers about the hijackings. Once NORAD had been notified, further missteps slowed the scrambling of fighter jets. A "Vigilant Guardian exercise" on that date is credited for increasing air readiness, but other reports suggest that some personnel mistook alarm messages for part of the exercise.

The Pentagon has not stated how many people knew about the "Vigilant Guardian exercise" beforehand and still has not revealed the identities of hijackers who received flight training on U.S. military bases. Military service usually involves giving up a degree of privacy, including vital statistics—height, weight, blood type, *etc.* Surely any information collected on the suspects might help other investigators, but the White House is not forcing the Pentagon to disclose it. Instead, the investigations of nominally independent September 11 Commission are being impeded at every juncture by the White House.

This is not a politically astute move by the Bush administration, which is opening itself up to the most devastating of arguments: Why, Mr. President, are you covering up September 11, even while sending our young people out to die, ostensibly in response to it?

Margie Burns is a freelance writer in the Washington, D.C., area.

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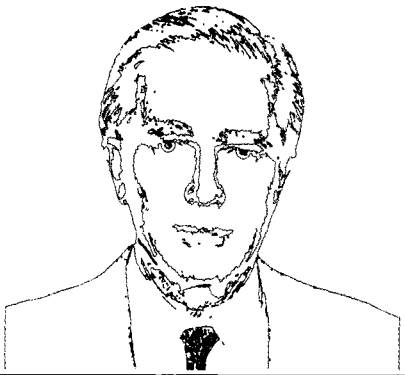
by George McCartney

Caution: Allegory Ahead



Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

Directed by Michel Gondry
Screenplay by Charlie Kaufman
Distributed by Focus Features

***The Return* (Vozvrashcheniye)**

Produced by Ren Film
Directed by Andrei Zvyagintsev
Screenplay by Vladimir Moiseyenko and Aleksandr Novototsky
Distributed by Kino International

Allegory is a tricky undertaking. Its practitioners must conceal at first what they mean to reveal at last. If their story is too obvious, their audience is deprived of the pleasure of discovery. If too cryptic, its design may disappear beneath the surface of its plot. Striking the balance is everything, as demonstrated by the two films under review this month.

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind was scripted by Charlie Kaufman, who is currently America's allegorist extraordinaire, a status he earned with *Being John Malkovich* in 1999. Conceived by Kaufman and directed by Spike Jonze, *Malkovich* is an exceedingly clever, if finally lightweight, meditation on the withering of personal identity in the age of celebrity worship. Teaming with Jonze once more in 2001, Kaufman wrote *Adaptation*, consolidating his fame among the cognoscenti with a skillfully deployed postmodern conceit. He inserted himself as a character into the film, which was supposed to be an adaptation of *The Orchid Thief*, Susan Orlean's study of the floral species' adaptive capabilities. Kaufman wittily fused horticultural with cinematic adaptation, producing a hybrid of adaptive self-indulgence.

There is a problem with these and Kaufman's other films, however: They are amusing intellectual performances that leave you feeling conned. As you depart the theater, you cannot help suspecting Kaufman has been fooling with your sympathies for no better purpose than to plume his own sense of superiority. *Eternal Sunshine*, however, takes a new tack. Kaufman has checked his wise-guy gamesmanship in order to take on a theme of genuine consequence. Forced to guess, I would say that he has dropped his ironic postmodernism to develop some autobiographical concerns. The results are at once humorous and bracing.

Directed by erstwhile commercial-maker Michel Gondry, the film flashily probes the central problem of all human relationships: our inability to break out of the prison of our self-infatuation, a circumstance dear to Kaufman's self-regarding heart. Each of us is locked inside his own mind, the story suggests, a penal state that causes us to misread other people, often disastrously, especially when our romantic longings are engaged. Under the sway of Venus, the loved one too often becomes the slate on which we inscribe our short-winded fantasies, only to be disillusioned when they run out of breath.

Kaufman has taken his title from Alexander Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard," a poem that recounts the tale of the famous 12th-century lovers who allowed their feckless passion to swamp their judgment. This allusion aptly fits Kaufman's story of a would-be remedy for love gone wrong. Pope's Eloisa is a tormented woman. At once remorseful and rebellious, she can neither escape her guilt nor forget the joy that caused it. This leads her to long for a state of perfect innocence:

> How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!
> The world forgetting, by the world forgot.
> Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!

This is the warrant for Kaufman's central conceit, an artful bit of science-fiction gimmickry. A small company, aptly named Lacuna and run by a Dr. Howard Mierzwiak (Tom Wilkinson), can erase the spots of unwanted memories from the suffering mind. Given our culture's inane determination to make so mercurial a state as romance life's *summum bonum*, Lacuna's trade is never so brisk as at the approach of Saint Valentine's Day. The more intensely romance is celebrated, the greater the need to forget it when the flowers wilt and the chocolate melts. This is a proposition with which Clementine Kruczynski (Kate Winslet) brokenheartedly agrees. She is so fed up with her dear but drippy boyfriend, Joel Barish (Jim Carrey), that she has Lacuna rinse him from her mind. Unlike Pope's Eloisa, however, she is not exactly hankering for innocence; she just wants to forget the lackluster Barish, the sorry cause of her regrets, so she can move on to her next swain unencumbered. What better allegory for the modern insistence that relationships should be no-fault and hassle-free?

When Joel discovers Clementine's high-tech perfidy, he angrily elects to undergo the same procedure. Trouble arises, however, when the erasure of his memory is compromised by the curious forgetfulness of Dr. Mierzwiak's staff. The results of this malpractice give Kaufman an allegorical pass to explore how we routinely fail to understand one another, to our emotional and spiritual detriment.

All this is told in a fractured narrative that skittles back and forth across time and space as we enter into Joel's mind, prepared for erasure by Lacuna's patented medications. As Dr. Mierzwiak explores his memories, looking for traces of Clementine to eliminate, Joel begins to resist. He does not want to forget her after all. To fight the procedure, he hides himself in the most private precincts of his memory: an impulsive trip to Montauk Point on a frigid February morning; the time, as a four-year-old, he tried to hide under the kitchen table; the night his mother caught him in his adolescent bed with a naughty magazine. As he flees to these secret memories, he takes his imagined Clementine with him on an inner journey of discovery that may or may not change his life and his feelings for the real Clementine. The film is at its

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most intriguing in these passages. While never as profound or original as Kaufman seems to think it, his narrative manages to live up to Pope's observation concerning the creative imagination in "An Essay on Criticism":

> True Wit is Nature to advantaged dressed,
> What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.

The one blemish on this otherwise highly inventive film is that Kaufman and Gondry never cease to call attention to their allegory. They seem afraid we might miss their thematic ambitions. They might learn something in the way of subtlety from *The Return*, a Russian film by first-time feature director Andrei Zvyagintsev, who knows how to keep quiet about his allegorical intentions and thereby makes them all the more provocative. Like his American peers, he raises questions concerning our inveterate self-immurement, but he could hardly be further from Gondry in his visual style and Kaufman in his narrative conceits.

Zvyagintsev draws on the Bible to comment on the bewildered Russian national soul trying to make sense of its tattered patrimony at the opening of the 21st century—at least, I think this is his purpose. His enigmatic film hugs its secrets so tightly that, for critical honesty, only a Russian should be allowed to hazard a guess as to what they are. Zvyagintsev has said his movie is a "mythological look on human life." Maybe so; other than the Sphinx, however, few mythical beasts have been quite so silent.

The film begins with two brothers, Andrey (Vladimir Garin) and Ivan (Ivan Dobronravov), who seem to be about 14 and 12 respectively. They live with their mother and grandmother in a nearly desolate lakeside village somewhere outside of Moscow. Returning from their roughhouse play one evening, they discover their father, played gloomily by Konstantin Lavronenko, has unexpectedly returned after a 12-year absence. Their mother points to the bedroom, and they peep through the half-opened door to catch a glimpse of a sleeping man inside. Wrapped in a white sheet and foreshortened by the camera's foot-of-the-bed perspective, the man looks too much like Andrea Mantegna's *The Dead Christ* for the shot to be merely a coincidence, as later events will support. The boys ask their mother, "Where did he come from?" She says mysteriously, "He just came." The boys rush to the attic, where Ivan digs into a trunk and pulls out a large book illustrated with William-Blake-like drawings. Is it a Bible? From between its pages, the boy pulls a photograph of a man. There is certainly a resemblance to the stranger sleeping downstairs, but Ivan nevertheless has doubts. After all, if this is a second coming, it has gone strangely unheralded. When their father—if he is their father—awakes shortly afterward, he emerges from his bed grim-faced, gaunt, and perversely laconic. He offers no explanations as to where he has been, what he has been doing, or why he has returned. At dinner, he takes his unchallenged place at the head of the table, where he opens a bottle of red wine and pours it into glasses for each member of the family. He ritualistically breaks a loaf of bread and hands its pieces around the table, asserting himself as the household lord once more. The religious symbolism is so obvious that it borders on the comic, especially since this redeemer seems extraordinarily short of compassion. He never once smiles at his family. When Andrey holds out his glass for a refill, he ignores him. This is a man determined to ration his meager supply of mercy.

Then, without preamble, the father announces that he will take the boys on a fishing trip the following morning, and his wife instantly accedes to his plan, although she, too, knows nothing about who he has become during his absence. When they retire to bed, he lies down and, within seconds, turns away from her and falls asleep.

The rest of the narrative is taken up with one of the oddest journeys in film history. As the father drives the boys to an unspecified destination, he continues to keep his own counsel. He stops at times to telephone someone about something, but neither the boys nor we ever find out who or why. Meanwhile, he practices some tough love on his sons—or is it cruelty? Ivan is harshly punished for being hungry. Andrey is told that he is contemptibly soft for not standing up to some older toughs who clearly outmuscle him. Twelve years away, and this is how you treat your kids? What gives?

The last leg of the journey is even more bizarre. They take a small boat to an island, where the boys fish while the father goes off by himself to dig up a small metal box buried in the foundation of a partially demolished house. How did he know where to find this box? What is inside of it? Again, no answers.

While Zvyagintsev has been nearly as tight-lipped in interviews as his film's father, it does not take a Ph.D. in allegory to discern that he is offering a parable about Mother Russia. His characters represent a people who were deprived of their patrimony by the Bolshevik revolution and are now confused by its sudden, if partial, return. What are they to make of it? Does the restoration promise a return to a culture interrupted? The Abraham-and-Isaac imagery at the film's ending is not reassuring. If only we could find out what is in that tin box!

Zvyagintsev gets away with his mysterioso act largely because his cinematography and compositions are so uncannily compelling. From his first shot of a silvery lake under a gray dawn, you know that you are in the hands of a master. The lake's waters fill the screen, shimmering preternaturally. Are they warm or cold, inviting or ominous? The visual ambiguity puts you immediately on notice: Something is amiss. Zvyagintsev follows this with a series of desolate scenes that recur throughout the film. They are a visual motif of unnerving absence. Once the father and his boys reach the mysterious island, this nothingness becomes more insistent. The camera is slow to follow the characters when they move out of range. Instead, it lingers longingly on empty space. It is a strategy that conveys an almost unbearable sense of loss. The poignant bleakness of this quietly astonishing film will trouble you long after the final credits.

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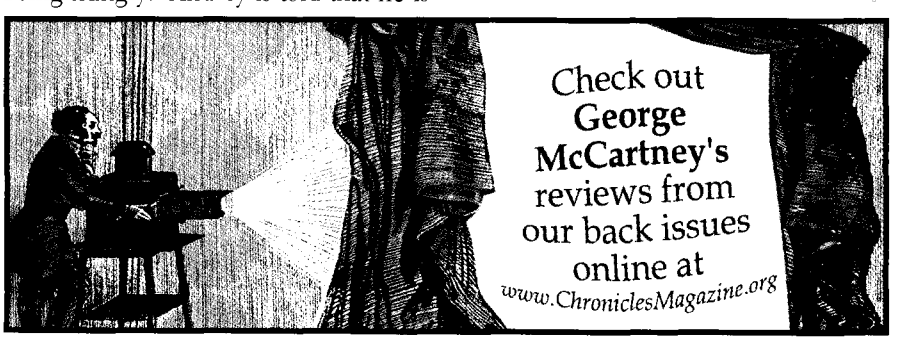

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by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

The Warming of the West

We know that nothing in this world stays the same. What we do not know is how or why it doesn't. Probably, this is because we do not need to know.

After five or six years in western Wyoming, in the late 1970's and early 80's, I recognized what seemed a stable weather pattern. Summers were warm and dry, except for the afternoon thunderstorms. By the end of June, the prairie had browned and stayed that way until after the monsoon that commenced like clockwork in mid-August and lasted until the start of September. Around the end of the first week of the month, an overnight storm dropped six inches of snow that melted off by ten in the morning. From then on, a perfect Indian Summer prevailed, dry and warm and windless under a shiny, cloudless sky—until the first of the snowstorms that rolled in without warning from the Pacific in the last week of October and kept on coming until Christmas. January and the first part of February were dry and very cold, with temperatures as low as -50 degrees, before the chinook thaw in mid-February arrived. March was wet again, and the biggest winter storms came in April. From mid-May, the prairie was green and fresh until the heat and drought of early summer seared it in late June. The pattern seemed fixed as the constellations in their seasonal course—before, in the mid-80's, it came apart in the drought years that culminated in the Yellowstone conflagration in the summer of '88.

Though there were wet years again after that, the familiar cycle had not succeeded in reestablishing itself in 1997, when I moved to New Mexico for two years. The spring of '99 (the year I returned north), Wyoming looked as if it had been airbrushed green to make an Irish travel brochure; since then, the region has suffered from almost unrelieved drought, said by climatologists to rival a dry period in the mid-18th century lasting 30 or 40 years. Two years ago, most of Colorado seemed on fire. This year, following a winter that got off to a start like an old-timer's nightmare before losing all interest in life and collapsing in neurotic exhaustion into an early grave, the fire warnings began in the middle of March as the snows receded from the foothills of the Front Range. On approach into Denver International Airport on the second day of spring, I watched the High Plains lifting rapidly toward the belly of the big jet, brown and patchy like the hide of a sick lion, showing green only in the turned sections where the winter wheat struggled to take hold in rows of desiccated parallel scratches.

If the American West really is suffering from global warming, and if global warming is actually caused by an industrial system powered by fossil fuels, then this is no more than poetic justice, the economy of the West being heavily dependent on mineral extraction. Strangely, this goes ignored by the agricultural interest, despite the fact that agriculture sees itself as the major, if not the sole, victim of the warming trend, and that its hostility toward the extractive industry is legendary. Of course, modern agriculture is itself an industry, as dependent on oil and petrochemicals as any other. Still, it is not in the nature of ranchers to exercise sweet reason for the purpose of putting other people's trials and tribulations on a level with their own. Where the issue of global warming is concerned, it is possible that they recognize that they and the international corporations who own the rights to the minerals underlying their sugar-beet fields and cattle herds are in the same boat. As indeed we all are.

If global warming produced by industrial development is not a reality, then it ought to be, in the sense that it is unrealistic to suppose that human civilization can vent millions of tons of particulate matter into the atmosphere, year after year, decade after decade, century after century, without producing climatic change, good, bad—or simply neutral. There is always that third possibility to excuse us from having to ask, "Good for what?" and "Bad for what?" to which the obvious answer seems to be, "Bad for whatever exists in the contemporary epoch." From this, the hypothetical visitor from Mars might be pardoned for concluding that Dick Cheney would be in favor of regulations designed to halt the warming process and Ralph Nader, opposed to them. What *is* is for destruction: What *is not* is to be realized in the future. Of course, human beings are not as consistent as that. Modern "conservatives" want stability in order to perpetuate the destabilizing forces of turbocapitalism, while "liberals" desire change that will produce stasis, which appears to them as the End of History. *If we really are free to determine our own destiny, then we shouldn't be.*

It is a certain fact that the earth's atmosphere is warming and has been for at least a hundred years. Whether the change is a natural phenomenon of the sort that brought the Ice Age to a close 11,500 years ago, or whether it is man-made—or a combination of both—is the question on the table. So far, the debate has set politicians on the one side, activists on the other, and scientists somewhere in between. But as the evidence in favor of the human factor mounts, the politicians have tended to disengage themselves from the argument by assuming an aloof demeanor that signals a determined uninterest and neglect strikingly at odds with their policy of opinionated interference in every other situation under the sun. When a group of "concerned" scientists recently accused the Bush administration of failing to acknowledge scientific research that contradicts its preconceived conclusions, the administration's spokesmen hardly bothered to defend it against the charge. More significantly, the administration ignored entirely a worst-case scenario commissioned within its own Defense Department warning that, within as little as 20 years, global warming could inundate European as well as Third World cities, decimate crop production worldwide, make fresh water a scarce commodity, and lead to mass migrations and endemic nuclear warfare as countries contend with one another for the basic necessities of existence. This time around, the White House did not risk detailing

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spokesmen to engage in damage control; instead, everyone was ordered to keep mum, and the story, which had appeared in the British *Observer* and the *Washington Post*, evanesced like snowdrops in an overheated January. For the Department of Defense, global warning looms as a security threat more dire than Al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, Syria, or Iran. For the Commander in Chief, it is both an unwanted nuisance and a severe political embarrassment.

"Where there is no solution," James Burnham was fond of observing, "there is no problem." That is one of the wisest sayings ever said, and it would be pleasant to imagine that the wisdom it represents is reflected in the political establishment's response to the "problem" of global warming. Of course, we all know better than to believe that, understanding as everyone does that modern politicians acknowledge no limits to positivist philosophies and the activist politics to which they give rise. Politicians, however, *are* extremely quick to recognize one thing: They always know when they are trapped. In the overwhelming majority of crises in which they find themselves ensnared, the trap is of their own making, or created by particular petty circumstances, or simply a stroke of bad luck. One time in every 10,000, however, politicians discover themselves trapped by history—and are so warned by their preternatural political sense. The global-warming crisis is one of those times, their trap being our trap as well—the world's trap. The ancients called it Fate, and the politicians might, too—if only they had a philosophical concept to match the word. On the one hand, you might assure your constituency that you, a mere human being, cannot be expected to prevail against the force of destiny; on the other, seeking to transfer superhuman responsibility from your own Bible-backed shoulders onto those of Atlas seems unbecoming to one who ran for office as a superhuman being proposing to anneal himself with that paradivinity called "the state." Or, you could invoke God's Will to excuse your impotence—had you not spent your career explaining that the Will of the Deity is really one and the same thing as your own. If only George W. Bush, reviled by international opinion for having refused to sign the Kyoto Treaty, had said either "Climate control is incompatible with economic growth, and so humanity will have to find a way to accommodate itself to global warming, as it has to innumerable other natural challenges," or "There *is* no solution to the problem of global warming; therefore, global warming is not a problem," his behavior would have been that of a philosopher, a statesman, and an honest man. Unfortunately, the American political system precludes the president from being any of these. It does not, however, make him wrong in his view of global warming and his sense of historical entrapment an illusion.

The political classes are probably incapable of learning from (as opposed to reacting to) the lessons the global-warming phenomenon has to teach the overweeningly presumptuous human race. The rest of us, however, are free to pay attention or not, as we choose.

Ongoing climate change is clearly a reality. Just as obviously, it is impervious to human action at this point in its development, whether humans bear any or all responsibility for it, or whether they have none. The reason has less to do with the insufficiency of technique than with the fact that humanity, as a collective, is temperamentally incapable of the kind of sustained cooperative action toward a given end that any human solution to the "problem" would entail. This inability, so far from being the lamentable moral flaw that liberals insist "society" could rectify through "education" and an end to "selfishness," is actually among *Homo sapiens*' most powerful self-defense mechanisms. Without it, most of Asia would be in the second or third millennium of despotism; the Third Reich would survive today in the assurance of another nine-and-a-half centuries of nationalistic glory ahead; the Soviet Union would rule half the world; the Frankfurt School would be lodged in the White House; and the United States would be governed by a jurisprudence developed from the precepts of permissive tolerance. This is the lesson of the Tower of Babel. Were humanity able to control its destiny, then humanity's destiny would be that of inhuman control. But God, in His infinite wisdom, made us differently. Because of it, we are, from time to time, victims of historical entrapment—in this instance, by smoking factory chimneys and swarming poisonous automobiles, expanding ozone holes, melting glaciers, rising oceans, bombarding ultraviolet rays, vanishing species, dying forests, flooded coastlines and islands. Bush and his people are absolutely right: Remedial action would be certain to destroy "the American way of life," which is also the way of life to which the entire world aspires—if, indeed, effective remedial action were possible, which it is not. Positivists always insist that we must plan for the long run, but men cannot achieve the degree of coordination, concentration, and determination required to implement long-run planning successfully. Historically, the most societies have ever managed in the long run is to endure the consequences of events ineluctably generated by aspects (often the most admirable aspects) of their unique individual characters. The translator who rendered the title of Malraux's novel *La conditione humaine* into English as *Man's Fate* was, in the Chestertonian tradition, working closer to truth than he was to fact.

Man is a species like any other on earth but also different from any other. For one thing, he is the sole species capable of altering the destiny of every species including his own, and even of ending it. There is poignancy in the situation, but for me, at any rate, driving from the airport north toward home along the hideously man-despoiled and man-desecrated Front Range of Colorado, little or no sympathy where the human race is concerned. Created in the image of God, we know what we are doing, whether or not we possess any longer the power to quit doing it. Unaware and unresponsible nature is another matter.

The plains where they run against the foothills of the Rocky Mountains are potholed with ponds and lakes, some of them natural, most of them nowadays man-made. These are home to large and innumerable flocks of Canada geese that, though nonmigratory, seem always in restless motion, lifting away in sudden flights from the surface of the water to wheel like windblown smoke above the mushrooming subdivisions and what remains of the fertile fields and tangled cottonwood stands. There are few bird types more intelligent than the Canada goose, which also mates for life; and I felt a pang on their behalf as I watched these birds beat powerfully through the mild spring air—unknowing that the air was smog and of what the fact portended for them, perhaps in the not-so-distant future.

Yet man is the only animal that knows he is going to die, and sentimentality is a sin of sorts. And so I put the geese from my mind and concentrated on the rugged indestructible mountains instead. Anyway, I tried to. c

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by Scott P. Richert

Trust(s) in the Media

Back when I was in college, a sociology professor assigned our class Michael Parenti's *Inventing Reality* for reading and review. In this book, subtitled *The Politics of News Media*, Parenti, an unabashed Marxist, comes across as a pale imitation of media watchdog Ben Bagdikian. Anyone who owns a media outlet or holds a position of authority in the media is, by definition, a "conservative," and, thus, any decision not to run a story that Parenti believes should have been run (or to leave out details that Parenti believes should have been in the story) amounts to "conservative censorship."

In my review, I fairly easily disposed of the book by analyzing the footnotes, showing that Parenti cited the very same sources that he criticized to back up his version of events. If the *Washington Post* "censored" a story, Parenti's discussion of what actually transpired would include a footnote to a *New York Times* story, and *vice versa*. In other words, Parenti's analysis proceeded on a case-by-case basis, with each successive case undercutting the previous one.

To his credit, my professor—whose political views were only slightly to the right of Parenti's—recognized that I had effectively dismantled Parenti's claims of conservative bias in the media, and I received an "A" on the paper.

Still, something about the book continued to gnaw at my mind. Parenti might be a completely blinkered ideologue (he labels *Reader's Digest* "ultraconservative"!), but he raises important issues, not of ideology, but of the concentration of power and resources. And so, a few years later, as a graduate assistant at The Catholic University of America, I relied heavily on the objective elements of Parenti's book—who owns what and how much—for a lecture on the modern media. My argument was that centralization in the media has effectively destroyed local news coverage—chain papers and conglomerated television and radio stations receive much of their content from the corporate center. Readers, viewers, and listeners are regarded as "consumers" of news rather than local citizens, and the content of the product consumed is less important to the chain than the fact of consumption. Any questions of media bias—liberal or conservative—pale next to these structural problems of media centralization.

Afterward, one of the brighter and more conservative students in the class came up to me. "I didn't realize you were a Marxist," he said. His response is typical of conservatives and even more so of libertarians, who today place utopian hopes in the "unfettered marketplace of ideas" (many of them bad, or quite wrong) called the internet while simultaneously believing that media companies, like all corporations, should be able to evolve toward monopoly unchecked except by another corporation. Even those who oppose the war in Iraq refuse to acknowledge the role that media centralization—and not simply centralized media—played in selling this unmitigated disaster to the American people.

I delivered that lecture on the modern media 13 years ago. In the meantime, under the Bush-Clinton-Bush administrations, the situation has grown much worse. Today, the bulk of the major media in the United States is owned or controlled by the "Big Five"—Time Warner, News Corporation, the Walt Disney Company, Viacom, Vivendi Universal, and Sony. Throw General Electric into the mix, and you have a complete list of the owners of all of the major television networks, broadcast and cable. Add Gannett and Clear Channel Communications, and you have sewn up the newspaper and radio markets as well.

In other words, in a country of 50 states and 270 million people, a mere eight companies control the bulk of what we read, hear, and watch. And if Michael Powell's FCC has its way and allows companies to purchase multiple forms of media in the same market (say, a newspaper, a television station, and a radio station), that centralization will only increase.

Trying to determine what any media company owns is an exercise in frustration. Both PBS's *Frontline* and the *Nation* have conducted major investigations, and charts of the results are available on the web at *pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/giants/* and *thenation.com/special/bigten.html*, respectively. Such charts, however, are no more than snapshots, because they become outdated almost as soon as they are constructed. The *Columbia Journalism Review* has responded by creating a constantly updated section on its website, *cjr.org/tools/owners/*, which provides lists of holdings by company as well as timelines of acquisitions for the largest companies. CJR also offers a search engine, so you can determine who owns what in your hometown.

I only have room to offer some highlights here. Time Warner, the biggest of the big, is also one of the most diversified. It owns America Online, Compuserve, ICQ, Netscape, and *MapQuest.com* (and has a partial ownership in *Amazon.com*); Time Warner Cable and Road Runner cable internet; Time Life Books; HBO, CNN (both television and radio), TBS, TNT, Turner Classic Movies, and the Cartoon Network; Warner Bros. Studios, the WB Television Network, Hanna-Barbera Cartoons, New Line Cinema, and Castle Rock Entertainment; 72 different magazines, including *Time*, *Life*, *Fortune*, *Money*, *Sports Illustrated*, *People*, and *Entertainment Weekly*, as well as the entire DC Comics line and *Mad Magazine*; 47 record labels; and several theme parks.

News Corporation, better known to Americans as Rupert Murdoch's Fox, owns 34 television stations in major cities across the United States; Fox News Channel, FX, National Geographic Channel, and Fox Sports (both television and radio); 20th Century Fox, Fox Searchlight, and Fox Television; the *New York Post* and 25 newspapers in the United Kingdom (including the *Sun* and the *Times*) and Australia (including the *Telegraph* and the *Post-Courier*); four magazines, including the *Weekly Standard* (it has a partial ownership in *TV Guide*); HarperCollins Publishers, which includes Christian publishing house Zondervan; and part or all of the Los Angeles Dodgers, Kings, and Lakers and the New York Rangers and Knicks.

Disney, like Time Warner, is highly diversified, owning the ABC Television Network and 10 television stations in major cities; 64 radio stations, including multiple stations in Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Los Angeles, Minneapolis-St. Paul, New York City, San

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Francisco, and Washington, D.C., and Radio Disney; ABC Family, the Disney Channel, and Toon Disney; Buena Vista, Touchstone, Walt Disney, and Miramax; the Go Network and numerous websites tied to its television and movie holdings; and, of course, over a dozen theme parks and resorts.

Viacom, too, is heavily diversified, with 34 CBS and UPN television stations, as well as five unbranded stations; MTV, Nickelodeon, BET, TV Land, VH1, Spike TV, Comedy Central, Showtime, The Movie Channel, Flix, and Sundance; Spelling Television and King World Productions; Infinity Broadcasting, which owns 176 radio stations (it owns multiple stations in every market it is in); Westwood One; Paramount; Simon & Schuster; and Blockbuster.

Clear Channel Communications—famous for supporting the war in Iraq by organizing mass burnings of Dixie Chicks albums—owns 39 television stations and almost 1,200 radio stations nationwide and has holdings in 65 countries around the world. In most markets, it owns multiple stations, often a half-dozen or more.

By contrast, General Electric, one of the largest companies in the United States, looks positively restrained in its media holdings, owning only the NBC Network, Paxson Communications, and Telemundo Communications Group; 14 television stations; and cable networks Bravo, CNBC, and MSNBC (which it operates in partnership with computer giant Microsoft).

More interesting, perhaps, than each company's individual holdings are these joint partnerships, which point both to a high level of cooperation among supposed competitors and to convenient paths for further centralization. Disney, for instance, is co-owner of ESPN and Lifetime with Hearst Corporation; A&E and The History Channel with Hearst and GE; and E! Entertainment with Comcast and Liberty Media. Vivendi has partnered with Yahoo! and Sony in the Duet music-subscription service and owns 26.8 million shares in Time Warner. And Time Warner co-owns Court TV with Liberty Media and has partnered in multiple music ventures with Sony, EMI, Bertelsmann, and News Corp.

It appears the libertarians might realize half of their dream after all. With big media moving increasingly into cyberspace, however, their hopes for the continued free flow of information may well be dashed. c

Other Resources

Websites of Selected Media Conglomerates

Diversified:
Time Warner: *timewarner.com*
News Corporation: *newscorp.com*
Viacom: *viacom.com*
Walt Disney Company: *disney.com*
Vivendi Universal: *vivendiuniversal.com*
Sony: *sony.com*
Bertelsmann: *bertelsmann.com*

Primarily Broadcast:
Clear Channel Communications: *clearchannel.com*
General Electric: *ge.com*
Comcast: *comcast.com*
Liberty Media Corp.: *libertymedia.com*

Primarily Print:
Gannett: *gannet.com*
Hearst Corporation: *hearstcorp.com*

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